Draft Consolidated Report

Community Radio and Development in Sierra Leone and Liberia

Radio Life (Zorzor, Lofa County, Liberia)
Radio Kergheamahn (Ganta, Nimba County, Liberia)
Radio Wanjei (Pujehun District, Sierra Leone)
Radio Kolenten (Kambia District, Sierra Leone)

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Executive Summary

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) has been working in Liberia since 1997 and in Sierra Leone since 2000. SFCG's Talking Drum Studio (TDS), with offices in Monrovia and Freetown, has established its brand across the region as a leader in peacebuilding through community radio programming and related activities. The overall goal of SFCG and Talking Drum Studio in the region is to strengthen sustainable peace by educating and empowering communities through community radio. SFCG and TDS have been achieving this through a variety of radio projects, including news shows, soap operas, and community outreach projects. Given over ten years of experience utilizing community radio in Sierra Leone and Liberia for the promotion of peace, SFCG has strong reason to believe in community radio's capacity to promote a transparent, accountable, and participatory development process in these countries.

In June of this year, Search for Common Ground/Talking Drum Studios undertook a learning evaluation of four community radio stations in rural Sierra Leone and Liberia. The evaluation focused on areas still struggling to achieve meaningful development in a post-conflict setting and was designed to assess the relationships between drivers of development and community radio stations. Current radio programming was also analyzed for its impact on local development processes while an audience survey and focus groups were used to better understand audience perceptions and uses of local radio. Lastly, radio stations were evaluated in their capacity as independent development agents with an eye towards ongoing peacebuilding functions. This evaluation drew on four weeks of field-based data collected and was conducted through programming and schedule analyses, individual stakeholder interviews, broad-based listener surveys, focus group discussions, and close analyses of radio stations' management, staff, and operations.

The four radio stations evaluated in this study are:
1. Radio Kergheamahn in Ganta, Nimba County, Liberia;
2. Radio Life in Zorzor, Lofa County, Liberia;
3. Radio Wanjei in Pujehun District, Sierra Leone; and
4. Radio Kolenten in Kambia District, Sierra Leone

This consolidated report attempts to identify general trends across these four stations. Specific key findings are outlined in a comprehensive Findings section. Results are also summarized below:

With respect to radio and its relation to development, community radio plays a central role in disseminating information about development and in improving development outcomes through partnerships with development actors at all levels. However, radio impact at present is often reliant on the cooperation of government. In addition, community radio stations could capitalize more on their power as media outlets to compel government participation in media.

In regards to radio's role as an independent agent of development through programming and effective operation of stations, it was determined that locally-produced, community-issues based programming, particularly that which serves as a platform for community voices, is high-impact and exceedingly popular with audiences of community radio stations. Sensitization and awareness programs, also popular, have shown a demonstrable impact on attitudes in behaviors among listeners. In addition, local language programming is highly appreciated. All audiences, however, report an unmet demand in these programming areas. In particular, women are woefully underrepresented in both radio station staff and programming. A concentrated effort to recruit and train women reporters, announcers, and managers should be undertaken at all stations. Programming on women's-issues should also be expanded.

Similarly, radio station capacity building is universally required. Staff and management training, equipment, and transport are all major issues where a capacity building intervention could vastly improve station performance. Finally, financial sustainability is a major concern at all community radio stations observed in this study. It should be noted, however, that community-derived revenues at all stations could be greatly expanded.

In radio's role as an agent of peacebuilding, this study finds that community radio continues to be a major presence and promoter of community cohesiveness. Specifically, programming that directly addresses issues related to community inclusiveness and non-violent conflict resolution has meaningful impact across locations. Radio is also noted as an active agent in diffusing local conflict and preventing backsliding into violence. At the same time, however, all locations revealed a significant unmet potential for increased quantity and quality of radio-led peacebuilding. Specifically, inclusion of marginalized populations – particularly women and youth – could be improved. This again underlines the need for broad capacity building across community radio stations.

Finally, this study concludes that in addition to explicit peacebuilding programming, radio stations' promotion of inclusive development processes – such as good governance, effective communication, security, and local economic growth - has a broad impact in also promoting sustainable peace.

A. Introduction

Since beginning operations in West Africa, Search for Common Ground, through its local media production studio Talking Drum Studio, has grown into a household name. As Sierra Leona and Liberia have transitioned from violence to peace, SFCG has supported the process with public information, dialogue, community outreach and capacity building. Today, Search for Common Ground Talking Drum Studio believe in bringing together different parties to an issue to collectively discuss challenges and together decide how to move forward. Such venues for collective decision-making can bring together local government, the community, traditional leaders, and even large companies active in the area. This emphasis on an inclusive approach to community problem solving has formed the foundation of SFCG's peacebuilding work for over a decade in the region. Now, as Sierra Leone and Liberia continue their transformation from states of conflict to a states of development, SFCG sees the potential for applying this same philosophy of change to the need for community-led, participatory, and transparent development. Moreover, given their extensive experience with community radio as a force for peacebuilding, SFCG and Talking Drum Studio now see in those same community radio stations a powerful potential to impact development and sustainable growth in the region.

This study explores community radio's potential impact on development processes in the rural communities it serves by: mapping drivers of development in the relevant regions, investigating the role of radio in development at present, and examining community radio's current status as an agent of development itself. This consolidated report will attempt to outline general trends in evidence across the four community radio stations under assessment. SFCG's goal of facilitating healthy dialogue and collective and transparent development processes through increased citizen engagement is the animating force behind this study.

B. Structure of the Report

This report is designed to examine and analyze relationships between community radio stations and those actors and organizations that are driving development in their communities. Ultimately, the report seeks to detail the current and potential impact community radio stations are having on development, as well as the radio's ongoing role as a peacebuilding agent. Finally, the report will suggest measures that can be taken to improve radio's standing as a powerful player in local development, peacebuilding, and information-sharing.

To accomplish these objectives, this report will begin with a brief background regarding the locations under study. An explanation of the study's methodology will then be followed by a discussion of the current development actors at work in the relevant communities. The study will then examine and assess the relationships that exist between key development actors and their local community radio stations.

Next, a discussion of general trends across the four radio stations being assessed with precede Conclusions and Recommendations.

C. The Study

1. Country Backgrounds

Located on the west coast of the African continent, Liberia shares borders with Guinea, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. The country was engaged in a fourteen-year civil war that destroyed much of its infrastructure and fledgling financial systems. The civil war claimed the lives of over 150,000 citizens and displaced 850,000 inhabitants. In 2006, Liberia conducted its first free and fair elections, which resulted in the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as president.

SFCG has been working with Liberia since 1997 to provide peacebuilding support and, specifically, assistance in assuring a peaceful election process. Currently, SFCG and its West African media arm, Talking Drum Studio (TDS), works towards an overall goal of strengthening citizen participation and inclusion to consolidate peace in Liberia. Through 2011, SFCG aims to bridge the gap between government and civil society through intensive outreach and media work with an eye towards peacebuilding in general and the fostering of participatory development processes.

Located on the southwest coast of West Africa, Sierra Leone borders Guinea to the north and northeast and Liberia to the southeast. The country was engaged in a decade-long civil war that claimed 50,000 lives, left thousands mutilated, displaced over a million people, and turned more than 7,000 children into child soldiers. Since the end of the war in 2002 the country has struggled to rebuild and to heal. Peace is still considered fragile, as thousands of ex-combatants are reintegrated into communities and refugees continue to flood back to Sierra Leone, seeking to restart their lives. Families and communities need to recover from the trauma they have suffered in the conflict, and the root causes of the war are still being addressed. Sierra Leone ranks second to last in the most recent Human Development Index

Search for Common Ground, which opened in Sierra Leone in 2000 and has three offices throughout the country, seeks to use media and outreach as tools to help find solutions to ongoing and new conflicts in Sierra Leone. SFCG accomplishes this goal in part by promoting local, national and sub-regional dialogue. This programme works in conjunction with our Liberia and Guinea programmes for greater peace and stability in West Africa, through the work of its West African media arm, Talking Drum Studio. SFCG aims to bridge the gap between government and civil society through intensive outreach and media work with an eye towards peacebuilding in general and the fostering of participatory development processes.

2. Location Backgrounds

Located in Nimba County, Radio Kergheamahn has been broadcasting since 2002, though operations were interrupted for a period of two years during Liberia's Second Civil War. Nimba County is located in the north-central portion of Liberia. During the Second Civil War, Nimba became a crucial fighting ground when the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel forces entered the

country through the Guinean border.   Generally, life in Nimba is rural-based with most of its population subsisting as farmers. Ganta, also known as Gompa County, is the largest district in Nimba County with a population of approximately forty thousand. It is a bustling commercial center that experiences lively trade activity with Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, and bordering districts.

Located in Lofa County, Radio Life is the only available radio station and the principal source of both news and entertainment for two of the county's six political sub-divisions, or Districts: Zorzor and Salayea. Lofa itself was for many years a center of agricultural production and, before the war, was considered the 'breadbasket' of Liberia. Economic activity in Zorzor and Salayea, which occupy the county's southern and easternmost areas along the border with Guinea, continues to be primarily agriculture-based. Today, much of the development *agenda* centers on revitalizing industries closely linked to the area's wealth of natural resources, whether farming, timber, rubber production, or mineral extraction. At present, however, the bulk of development *activities* focus on achieving basic amenities and services for Lofians across the county.

According to County figures, over 95% of those currently residing in Zorzor and Salayea were displaced during the war and nearly 50% of all current residents have only returned to the area in the last five years. While at least six distinct ethnic groups populate Lofa County, Zorzor and Salayea Districts are home to three major groups: the majority Lorma, the Kpelle, and the Mandingo people. The area is predominantly Christian, though there is a strong Muslim minority primarily comprised of Mandingos. Traditional cultural practices are resurgent as normalcy increases through the post-conflict period. The Poro and Sande societies, for example, continue to play a significant role in the education and initiation of young people.[1] Local economies in Zorzor and Salayea Districts are primarily agriculture-based and include a bustling informal trade in with communities from nearby Guinea.

After two years broadcasting to a displaced camp in Bong County, Radio Life began operating in the area in 2005 and is now based in Zorzor City. The station's 500-watt transmitter extends its broadcast range into parts of Bong and Nimba counties and Voinjama District to the north, but its primary area of coverage is Zorzor and Salayea Districts in Lofa County.

Pujehun District is located in the southern province of Sierra Leone, sharing its eastern border with Liberia, and has an estimated population of 260,000 people. It is divided into 12 chiefdoms, 88 sections, and 149 villages and is considered one of the most underdeveloped districts in Sierra Leone. Most development goals center on securing a sanitary water system and paving roads, with electricity further down the list. Radio Wanjei, located in the district headquarter town of Pujehun, is the only radio station available in the district and the primary source of both news and entertainment (no other formal media exist). Much of Pujehun's population throughout the district is composed of farmers, with rice, cassava, palm, and rubber being among the crops commonly grown.

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[1] Demographic data taken from the "Lofa County Development Agenda: Republic of Liberia, 2008 – 2012" (pages 2 – 5) and reflecting statistics drawn from the 2008 National Population and Housing Census.

The civil war in Sierra Leone began in Pujehun District in 1991, and as a result, the region suffered an especially high amount of devastation throughout the 10-year war. Roughly seven years after the war, the district has been unable to rebuild much of the destroyed infrastructure, nor has it been able to regain its exporting farming activities. Much of the population fled to Liberia and Bo, the provincial capital about 60 miles to the north, during the rebel war, and not all have returned. Amputees, widows, and orphans are in high number and still find difficulty with daily survival tasks.

The overwhelming majority of the population in Pujehun is Mende, with minor populations of Temne, Fullah, and Vai. The district is predominantly Muslim, with most of the remaining population members Christian. A stronghold of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), Pujehun District has a history of political tension, which flared in the 2007 election in a display of violence at the radio station. Overall, however, the district is characterized by peacefulness.

Radio Wanjei was established in December of 2006 through funding from OSI-WA and with the help and support of various community leaders. Its transmission reaches the majority of district villages, though not always the outermost populations.

Kambia District is situated in Sierra Leone's Northern Province, and borders Guinea to the North. Its seven chiefdoms house a total population of over 270,000[2]. During the civil war, which only reached the district in the late 1990s, most inhabitants fled to Guinea.

Radio Kolenten began broadcasting in December 2005, established with the help of the international NGO Action Aid to address injustices and inequalities in the district, to raise awareness of governance mechanisms, and to further development (health, water, sanitation, education, food security) and peacebuilding. It is the only community radio in the district and broadcasts in all relevant local languages – Krio, Temne, Susu, Limba, and Fullah. Its vision is to be a "neutral and impartial institution that seeks to enhance and strengthen ideals of participatory democracy and human rights for sustainable local governance and peaceful coexistence." The station is headed by the board of advisors (comprising the seven paramount chiefs of the district) and a sub-board committee (comprising local NGOs). At the operational level, management consists of the station manager, head of production, commercial manager, chief editor, and senior technician. Staff does volunteer work, although it receives occasional (external) trainings and irregular stipends.

3. Evaluation Objectives

This study seeks to determine how community radio can be better positioned to drive development and support peaceful transformation of conflict in the communities they're broadcasting to. This study gathers and analyzes information on how community radio stations are interacting with drivers of development in their communities. Radio's work as a conduit of information between those development actors and the radio's core listenership is also examined here. Alongside analysis of radio and its relationship to development, information on radio programming, effectiveness of radio stations' day-to-

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[2] According to the latest (2004) census.

day operations, and audience feedback to programming will all be considered in assessing community radio stations' capacity and impact. In compiling this information, this consolidated report will identify general trends across the four radio stations being studied and will inform Search for Common Ground of the current state of community radio impact. Finally, this study will suggest areas where further development of radio station capacity could improve development and peacebuilding outcomes in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

4. Methodology

4.1 Intended Audience

This study is intended as a learning evaluation and, therefore, is focused on gathering information about general trends across four community radio stations in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The study will foster a better understanding of community radio's current and potential impact on development and peacebuilding in the communities stations serve. The study is prepared for Search for Common Ground, and is intended for internal use, with particular significance for Search for Common Ground and Talking Drum Studios in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

4.2 Evaluation Tasks and Tools

Tool 1 – Matrix of Radio Programming
      Sub-Question: How does radio programming address the development agenda?
      The tool compares *intended* radio programming as reflected in programming schedules provided by station managers to radio logs as registered by announcers (where available) and evidence of departures from the intended programming obtained from regular monitoring of station broadcasts. The result is an *actual* radio schedule that accurately reflects average weekly programming for the period of the study.
      This tool then analyzes actual radio programming as it is aired to determine the types and formats of radio programming in each community, as well as to better understand the diversity of voices typically given airtime.

Tool 2 – Community Radio Staff Questionnaire
      Sub-Question: How does radio programming and radio station operations impact development?
      Separate interviews were conducted with the Radio Station Manager and the Radio Station staff using the Community Radio Staff Questionnaire to determine the extent of staff and management's knowledge of, and responsiveness to, their audience. The questionnaire also includes information about the cost of operations, channels of funding, processes for creating programming, and 'ownership' of the radio station.

Tool 3 - Questionnaires for Development Drivers

Sub-Question: How does community radio link to the drivers of development in a community?

Questionnaires were addressed to drivers of development in each radio station's broadcasting area to ascertain how decisions about development plans and projects are made and whether key development drivers view radio as either a partner or as a tool for information-sharing in the development process. Development drivers included governmental leaders, traditional leaders (via the Chief system), local and international NGOs, and organized interest groups.

Organized interest groups and other members of local civil society were administered an adjusted questionnaire to reflect anticipated differences in the degree of influence these groups could reasonably wield over the development process. In these cases, the questionnaire sought to identify organization leaders' level of understanding of the development priorities, as well as the level of their participation in the creation of the development agenda and determination of projects.

Both questionnaires sought to gauge the extent to which interviewees are using community radio and the kinds of uses community radio are being put to.

Tool 4 -- Audience Survey

Sub-Question: How is community radio and its programming received by the audience?

This study included an audience survey tool to determine how community radio is received in the communities it services, what programming is effective, the extent to which radio informs local populations about development, how radio has impacted its communities, and how audience members feel radio can improve. Surveys were administered by local survey-takers to 150 audience members in each of the four study locations. While each location sought to survey an equal number of men and women, young people were weighted to accurately reflect age distribution in the underlying population. As a result, 65% of those surveyed in each location were aged 15 to 35 years old. Roughly half of all respondents were surveyed in the radio station's host community, whereas half were surveyed in communities outside the station's immediate home. A purposive sampling method was used, requiring survey-takers to go to a particular destination within the community (e.g., the market, schools, places of business, social gathering places, etc.) to identify respondents.

Tool 5 – Audience Focus Group Questionnaire

Sub-Question: How is community radio and its programming received by the audience?

Focus groups were used to glean in-depth information and anecdotes on the ways listeners use community radio, the ways community radio affects their lives, and the ways community radio is used or not used to involve them in the development process. Focus groups were generally comprised of people of a similar demographic background, though between focus groups representative gender and age diversity was sought.

4.3 Constraints to the Evaluation

This study had a number of limitations. First, of more than 50 community radio stations servicing hundreds of communities in Sierra Leone and Liberia, this study focuses on only four stations and their communities. Post-conflict development and peacebuilding processes can be vastly different from context to context. As a result, generalizations based on this study should be made with caution.

Second, the researchers are neither Sierra Leonean nor Liberian. While surveys were conducted by local assistants to the study, no official translators were used in the execution of the over 50 key stakeholder interviews and focus groups. Difficulties communicating with some participants in the study may have had a distorting effect on some of the data and analysis that resulted.

Third, the study was conducted by four researchers who had unique relationships with their host communities that may have impacted the comparability of results. Similarly, two researchers were male and the other two were female. Potential differences in how study participants responded to male and female researchers may have further distorted results. However, exactly how those factors influenced the results of the study cannot be known.

The use of surveys for many of the conclusions drawn herein is also inherently problematic. Each of the researchers overseeing survey implementation reported some degree of social desirability bias in their results. This was likely compounded by the fact that the communities wherein these studies took place were relatively small and many participants in the study were aware that they were being surveyed for a study on community radio. This may have resulted in responses more favorable to local radio stations than would otherwise have been captured. It is impossible to know which respondents answered based on their perceptions of what the sought response was and, therefore, this bias cannot be controlled for. In addition, it was believed that in at least some locations, challenges in training local survey-takers may have resulted in leading questions during survey implementation.

Finally, this evaluation was limited by time and resources. Transportation was limited, which affected the number of villages included in the study from the many within a given radio station's broadcast range. The four weeks of field work assigned for data collection was in some ways sufficient but in other ways resulted in incomplete information. Government officials, for example, often proved difficult to pin down over a four-week period. As a result researchers often had to resort to interviewing lower-ranking administrators and 'acting' heads. Apparent anomalies particular to the period of study in the performance of a radio station may have impacted overall impressions of the radio's capacity and effectiveness. Further, severe time constraints in the period reserved for developing the methodology led to the use of research tools that might have been improved with more time for development and testing, which itself was very limited. Lastly, logistical issues in bringing researchers together following their period of data collection led to a rushed write-up, limiting the opportunity to compare results and analyze data for general trends.

4.4 Recommendations for Similar Future Research Projects

The researchers involved in this study unanimously agreed that a period of testing research tools in a rural community radio setting, followed by a brief period to revise the methodology, would have greatly aided the quality of data collected. A chance to return to field sites for follow-up research after a brief review of initial findings would have also been helpful to ensuring complete and accurate information.

Similarly, given the broad scope of the study as well as the wealth of raw data collected over a one-month period, researchers felt that the study's final report(s) would have benefited from more time to analyze and write up results, particularly if all researchers had been afforded more time to work together in creating a common framework for analysis and reporting. (In this case, the majority of available time following fieldwork saw researchers divided between Monrovia and Freetown.)

D. Findings

In the selected research sites, the community radio stations are deemed valuable institutions to the communities. However, results commonly varied when determining how each radio station drives development and is used to drive development in its particular community. These findings look beyond differences to identify general trends across the four locations comprising the study.

1. Development Actors and the Radio

This section examines development processes in the communities under study and considers the relationships between drivers of development and community radio stations. The main findings are the following:

- The development process, in general, differs significantly between the two countries under study. General trends and recommendations across the two countries should be drawn with caution given these fundamental differences. To wit:
  - In rural Liberia, at present, development is dominated by international NGOs (INGOs), often operating outside governmental purvey. Political decentralization has yet to be implemented; local government actors and traditional leaders are typically vastly under-resourced and incapable of exerting any significant influence over the development agenda.
  - In Sierra Leone, District Councils are the key actors in the official development process, although the majority of funding for increasingly decentralized development comes from central government and is channeled through Line Ministries. Traditional leaders, by contrast, are not much involved in the process. International and local NGOs play some role in development but typically partner with government. The extent to which these organizations wield influence in development processes in Sierra Leone also differed across the two districts considered in this study.

- In communities across both countries, leaders are perceived as generally knowing their communities' needs but government-led development processes significantly lack accountability and transparency. The quantity and quality of information dissemination differs across the regions in this study.[3] However, community feedback mechanisms were sorely lacking at all locations and primarily informal where present.
- Three of four locations lacked an independent, well-resourced, locally-based organization capable of monitoring development projects. In Kambia, the Civil Society Movement, in partnership with community radio, performs this duty, though not to the extent necessary. While this would seem like a natural fit for community radio stations, capacity deficits appear to undermine stations' abilities in this regard.
- Community radio stations are significantly impacting development in their communities via strong relationships with a number of International and local NGOs. Impact falls across two categories:
  - Vital support for program implementation and coordination for development drivers, leading to improved efficiency, broader reach, accountability, and community feedback.
  - Regular airing of education and awareness programming via partnerships with INGOs like Search for Common Ground (Talking Drum Studio), The Carter Center, ActionAid, and the International Red Cross. Such programming has yielded demonstrable results in changing attitudes and behaviors with regard to, for example, women's rights (including GBV and rape), health, education, and nonviolent local conflict resolution.
- In Sierra Leone, relationships between political actors and radio are significant. While friendly relationships can sometimes increase information flows, the negative impact on actual and perceived impartiality is an overriding concern. Political tensions between actors and radio stations were observed resulting in incomplete or biased information, financial constraints on the radio, interruptions in radio broadcasts, and can even threaten peace in the community. In Liberia, a lack of political decentralization at present limits political considerations in local development. However, community members and radio stations note a concern over the increased political activity anticipated for the coming years (particularly with reference to 2011 elections). It is the contention of this study that political considerations and mechanisms to safeguard community radio independence will eventually prove crucial to sustainability.
- Across the four communities in this study, government at the most local levels engages radio, viewing local stations as an important tool for information-sharing. Specifically, radio stations in all locations have the option of attending monthly development-oriented planning and review meetings run by local government leaders. In Sierra Leone, these are District Council meetings that demonstrate a meaningful impact on local development agenda. By contrast, in Liberia these are

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[3] In three of four locations, information dissemination with regard to government-led development was deemed insufficient. In Pujehun (Sierra Leone) residents indicated satisfaction with information dissemination by local government though observation during the course of this study suggests that improved information-sharing could further benefit development outcomes.

District Development Committee meetings with minimal authority over development processes (owing to lack of political decentralization). It may also be useful to make a further distinction between the offer of participation to radio stations and actual outcomes. In Pujehun, regular radio coverage of these meetings yielded meaningful results and notably increased community knowledge of local development plans and activities. In Kambia, Zorzor, and Ganta, however, station participation in these meetings was limited due to profound capacity constraints. (For further discussion of capacity constraints, see section 2 below.)

- Evidence from all four locations considered in this study revealed meaningful relationships between radio and civil society organizations (CSOs). Trade unions, women's groups, youth groups, religious associations, teachers unions, and special interest groups all use radio to communicate important messages to respective memberships, improve their organizational profiles, voice their concerns to the community, and mobilize community-members to change attitudes and behaviors. Through their use of radio, CSOs experience improved efficiency and development outcomes relative to their own goals. In addition, many CSOs see radio as their primary tool for raising community awareness on issues important to them and influencing the public dialogue.

Overall, community radio plays a central role in disseminating information related to development and in improving development outcomes through partnerships with development actors at all levels. However, radio impact at present is often reliant on the cooperation of government. In addition, community radio stations are making limited use of their power as media outlets to compel government participation in media.

2. The Community Radio Station as an Agent of Development

While community radio's impact on development in the communities it serves is accomplished primarily through partnership with development agents and development-minded local actors, the radio is also a demonstrably effective, independent agent of development. This section considers general trends across the four locations with focus on programming, operational effectiveness, and relationships between radio and its audience.

The main findings are the following:

- Community radio is universally acknowledged in the communities it serves as the sole independent and reliable source of news and information. No available alternative source of information examined in this study (word of mouth, community meetings, etc) was deemed nearly as trustworthy or reliable as radio. In three of the four locations, community radio was the sole source of information in general (with no newspapers and no other radio broadcasts available on the FM dial). In Kambia, BBC and SLBS were also available on FM radio, making it more difficult to ascertain the extent to which people relied exclusively on community radio for news and information.

- Insufficient external monitoring of radio stations' broadcasts, however, has led to reduced impact in some cases, particularly related to the airing of pre-produced programming from partners like TDS. All four radio stations, however, also complained of poor communication with INGOs (3 stations cited problems with TDS specifically). In many cases, station managers noted receiving pre-recorded programming late or not at all. As a result, potentially powerful dramatic and educational programs are not always played in line with contracts.

- The same trend of poor accountability in programming was observed with regard to locally bought requests, announcements, and advertisements. In three of four locations, this was a complaint voiced by local community members and organizations alike.[4]

- When sensitization and awareness programs are played, people are listening. Such programming was frequently cited as among audience-members' favorite. In addition, extensive evidence underlined the power of sensitization and awareness programs to direct the public dialogue in these small, rural communities. Examples of topics covered in popular sensitization and awareness programs include: Child Rights, Disease Prevention, Childcare and Childrearing, Access to Education, Gender-Based Violence, Rape, Legal Rights (including statutory versus traditional systems of law), and Corruption.

- Similarly, radio in all locations were active promoters of community cleanliness and sanitation. A majority of listeners credited community radio stations with improving basic living conditions and influencing an attitude of community responsibility and pride in regard to their surroundings.

- Local language programming and locally-produced community news programs are popular and widely viewed as vital to communities' well-being. All communities reported a desire for increased local language programming and in two communities (one in Sierra Leone and one Liberia) community members felt that available local language programming did not adequately represent linguistic diversity in the population.

- Notably, each of the radio stations in this study are exceedingly male-dominated. At Radio Kolenten in Kambia, one of fourteen staff is female. At Radio Wanjei in Pujehun, it's one of fifteen staff members. At Radio Life in Zorzor, women number two out of thirteen staff members. And at Radio Kergheamahn in Ganta, only one of twelve staff members is a woman. Furthermore, results of an audience survey administered at all locations indicates a preference for women's voices on the radio (51% at Radio Wanjei, 40% at Radio Kolenten, and approximately 65% at Radio Life and Radio Kergheamagn). A significant number of respondents calling for more women's voices were also men. These results correlated with a similar demand for more programming on women's issues at all four stations.

- Capacity issues at both radio stations, however, limit the regular availability of local language and locally-produced community news programming.

- Interactive, public forum programming (call-in etc) are also frequently cited as both popular and impacting community attitudes and behaviors. While a number of these programs exist, stations are still failing to meet the demand for such

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[4] Failure to play locally bought programming was not an issue at Radio Kolenten in Kambia, Sierra Leone.

programming due to capacity constraints. Results of an audience survey showed that more opportunities for community participation on radio is a leading suggestion for improving stations' performance. Similarly, a small number of listeners in each location expressed a desire to influence radio programming more directly.

- All four radio stations considered in this study are generating revenues equivalent to between 50 and 60 % of monthly operating costs from their local communities. Evidence in all locations suggests, however, that potential local revenues are far greater. Specifically, radio stations included in this study are collecting revenues from a very small percentage of the communities their broadcasts reach. Significant capacity building is necessary to achieve higher community-derived revenues.

- Financial sustainability in general is a major concern at all stations studied. This is particularly true in Sierra Leone, where issues related to often low-quality generators have recently shut down broadcasts for extended periods of time. It should also be noted that all stations report enormous capacity challenges related to their inability to adequately pay staff.

- Capacity building, in general, is a major need at all radio stations considered in this study. By virtue of strong leadership, this study estimates that stations would be well-positioned to receive such an intervention. Specifically, the radio stations displayed capacity deficits in the following areas:
    - Improved transport (availability and reliability);
    - Training staff for professional journalism in:
        - News gathering techniques,
        - Objectivity,
        - Journalistic ethics, and
        - Fact checking / story verification;
    - Training staff for radio production;
    - Training staff for technical facility with computers and equipment;
    - Expanding staff to include correspondents in far-flung villages;
    - Recruiting and training women journalists, announcers, and managers;
    - Financial management systems and relevant training;
    - Management training in financial planning, fundraising, contracting, and financial oversight; and
    - Improved equipment[5] (recorders, basic computing / printing, etc).

- In general, programming produced in-house at community radio stations was perceived to have higher impact than programming pre-produced by outside actors. Examples of high-impact programming included local news magazines shows, locally-based investigative journalism shows, women's-issues

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[5] Stations in Sierra Leone reported a profound need for improved generators and related maintenance capabilities. For example, at Radio Kolenten in Kambia the station's current generator (its fourth since 2005) is insufficient to power air conditions in-studio and also causes unexpected power surges that effect computers and other equipment. This is not an observed problem in Liberia, where community radio stations are partnering with telecommunications companies to provide high quality generators at no cost to the station (via ALICOR).

programming, trivia, programming dedicated to exploring issues in romantic relationships, local sports news and live coverage, and discussions in local languages.

- Station leadership is perhaps the single overriding factor determining a radio station's impact and effectiveness. One station considered in this study, for example, achieves high impact primarily due to the efforts of its leadership. Much of Radio Life's (Lofa County, Liberia) success can be attributed to the tone set by manager QuaQua Miller, who dedicates nearly 80 hours a week to the station and is also a strong and audible voice for peace and community-led development in his community. It was notable across locations that the tone set by station managers' permeate staff attitudes and approaches to the work of a community radio station.

- Finally, it was observed at all stations that overwhelming majorities of audience members expressed a strong desire for expanded broadcast times. This was particularly in Sierra Leone where the stations studied here typically broadcast between 8 and 10 hours daily. Call for expanded broadcasts were less overwhelming but still evident in Liberia, where free electricity via partnerships with local telecommunication companies allowed both stations studied to broadcast between 16 and 18 hours daily.

Overall, it was determined that locally-produced, community-issues based programming, particularly serving as a platform for community voices, is exceedingly popular with audiences of community radio stations. Sensitization and awareness programs, also popular, have shown a demonstrable impact on attitudes in behaviors among listeners. In addition, local language programming is highly appreciated. All audiences, however, report an unmet demand in these programming areas. In particular, women are woefully underrepresented in both radio station staff and programming. A concentrated effort to recruit and train women reporters, announcers, and managers should be undertaken at all stations. Programming on women's-issues should also be expanded.

Similarly, radio station capacity building is universally required. Staff and management training, equipment, and transport are all major issues where a capacity building intervention could vastly improve station performance. Finally, financial sustainability is a major concern at all community radio stations studied here. It should be noted, however, that community-derived revenues at all stations could be greatly expanded.

3. The Community Radio Station as an Agent of Peacebuilding

Perhaps not surprisingly, given SFCG's and community radio's original focus on peacebuilding, the radio stations observed in this study continue to represent a strong voice for peace in the communities they serve. This section considers general trends across the four locations with regard to peacebuilding activities and outcomes.

The main findings are the following:

- Firstly, evidence from the four locations considered in this study suggests that a key assumption underlying the study warrants revisiting. In arriving at methodology used for this evaluation, it was assumed that development naturally corresponds with peacebuilding. Experiences at the four research locations, however, indicate that when divisive local politics infuses development processes it is not necessarily true that peacebuilding is a natural byproduct of development. As community radio stations focus on fostering development, political considerations must be handled tactfully to ensure that development does not jeopardize sustainable peace. Specifically, at the two Sierra Leonean locations considered here, development processes were typically highly partisan and as a result, related peacebuilding outcomes were less certain.

- However, it was universally agreed that political challenges represent an opportunity for community radio stations to further influence peace in their communities. In particular, an increased focus on issues surrounding corruption, partisanship, transparency, and political conflict could ensure a stronger correlation between development and peace.

- While existing programming devoted to peacebuilding was insufficient at all stations, those programs that did address peace and nonviolent local conflict resolution yielded a high impact on listeners and communities.

- Community perceptions at all locations indicated that community radio plays a major role in reducing violent crime in communities. Specifically, community members at all locations noted a reduction in rapes and gender-based violence due to radio programming. Similarly, in three of four locations strong evidence suggested radio has had a significant impact in changing attitudes towards GBV and rape. Still, it was widely agreed that radio could be doing more in this regard.

- Music, storytelling, and dramatic programming (entertainment) was specifically cited in all communities as yielding a significant positive outcome with regard to peace. Micro-communities around farms and rubber plantations, for example, noted that entertainment programming provides a needed release from daily tensions and distraction from hardships. In general, a majority of people across locations volunteered feeling that listening to radio on a daily basis made them happier.

- Significantly, community radio stations in all locations were described as active participants in diffusing potential violent crises. For example, in Kambia, Radio Kolenten works with local farmers and herders as well as governmental leaders to prevent violent conflict regarding disputes over rice production and cattle grazing. Such conflicts were once a common source of bloodshed in the late rainy season but no longer escalate. Similarly, at Radio Life in Zorzor, radio staff and locally-produced programming is credited by many (including the local Police Commander) with actively diffusing previously violent tensions between Mandingo and Lorma ethnic groups.

- In all locations, it was noted that radio particularly helps marginalized peoples without access to other means of communications (i.e. cell phones). As a result, this study contends that radio is a force for inclusion of those previously voiceless and most at-risk for backsliding into violent conflict in their communities. At some stations, access to public forum programming directly empowers

historically marginalized populations. In others, where the poorest residents do not have access to such programming, it is believed that the sense of connectedness created by local language, local news, and sensitization programming achieves considerable outcomes with regard to inclusiveness and community togetherness.

- At the same time, there is considerable potential and need for radio stations across all locations to do more in engaging otherwise invisible groups, particularly unemployed, uneducated, and unorganized youth. Similarly, marginalized women and children could be better included in radio programming and outreach. The unmet potential is particularly notable in light of the strong impact existing efforts have had.

- Radio was also universally cited as vital in facilitating peaceful election processes. In Liberia, for example, voter education around a complicated run-off vote between now-President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and George Weah reduced tensions notably, in ways that many believed warded off potential violence. While radio involvement in Sierra Leone in many constituted a learning experience – where radio stations at first found themselves overly involved in partisan politics – evidence from those communities now suggests radio is better-positioned to serve as a facilitator of peaceful elections. At all four locations, radio's ability to quickly disseminate election information is believed to have counter-acted the potential for unfounded rumors to fuel conflict. It is also the opinion of this study, however, that training specific to election processes will be essential to providing for peaceful elections in future.

- It should also be noted that one radio station evaluated in the course of this study could serve as a model for its impact on community togetherness and peace. At Radio Life in Lofa County, the station's exceedingly peace-minded station manager QuaQua Miller trains announcers to promote peace subtly yet effectively in each of the station's broadcast blocks. For example, one announcer begins each broadcast by welcoming each of the over 100 villages in listening range to his broadcast, often pausing to explain why he loves visiting a particular place. Similarly, public forum programming often features topics for call-in discussion like: "What are you doing to make Mama Liberia a better place?" and "Who is a role model in your community that is making this place a more peaceful one to live in?" Mr. Miller also holds his staff to standards of behavior well-known around Zorzor in both their on-air and private lives. During the course of this study, Mr. Miller suspended one announcer indefinitely for threatening a woman with violence. The indiscretion was also discussed on-air and became a tool for promoting peaceful relationships between men and women in the community.

Overall, this study finds that community radio continues to play a strong role in local peacebuilding. Specifically, programming that directly addresses issues related to community inclusiveness and non-violent conflict resolution has meaningful impact across locations. Radio is also noted as an active agent in diffusing local conflict and preventing backsliding into violence. At the same time, however, all locations revealed a significant unmet potential for increased quantity and quality of radio-led peacebuilding. Specifically, inclusion of marginalized populations – particularly women and youth –

could be improved. This again underlines the need for broad capacity building across community radio stations.

Finally, this study concludes that in addition to explicit peacebuilding programming, radio stations' promotion of inclusive development processes – such as good governance, effective communication, security, and local economic growth - has a broad impact in also promoting sustainable peace.

E. Recommendations

In order to heighten community radio's role as a powerful agent of inclusive development in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the following outcomes would be highly desirable:

- Increased station awareness of development projects across the broadcasting area;
- Dedicated monitoring and reporting activities related to announced, ongoing, and completed government-led and INGO/NGO development projects;
- Heightened role in aggregating and communicating community development needs to governmental and NGO development agents, with the aim of influencing the process of development and ultimately increasing community ownership;
- Regular (daily) unique local news broadcasts in English, Local English, and Local Languages including pre-produced elements (i.e. interviews from the field, phone interviews with drivers of development etc);
- Working professional relationships with drivers of development in the region, particularly with national, county, and local government;
- Greater political independence, particularly in Sierra Leone; and
- Increased activities dedicated specifically to fostering and maintaining sustainable peace.

The following are recommendations to achieve these outcomes and improve community radio's capacity to be a high-impact driver of development in its own right. Community radio stations need:

- Broad capacity building with an eye towards sustainability in the following core areas:
  - Improved transport (availability and reliability);
  - Training staff for professional journalism in:
    - News gathering techniques,
    - Objectivity,
    - Journalistic ethics, and
    - Fact checking / story verification;
  - Training staff for radio production;
  - Training staff for technical facility with computers and equipment;
  - Expanding staff to include correspondents in far-flung villages;

- o Recruiting and training women journalists, announcers, and managers;
  - o Financial management systems and relevant training;
  - o Training in operational and financial transparency;
  - o Management training in financial planning, fundraising, contracting, and financial oversight; and
  - o Improved equipment (recorders, basic computing / printing, etc).
- Development and implementation of a plan to improve and formalize weekly revenue collection from communities across the broadcast area, (requests, announcements, etc). In conjunction with appropriate transport, staffing, and audience education, it is believed that such a plan could immediately double community-derived revenues.
- Development of a 'marketing' function, possibly through TDS, to assist community radio stations in attracting short-term contracts with INGOs.
- Incorporation of the governmental development processes in regular programming, including national Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and the local development agenda, project plans, budgeting, project progress and impact, in regular programming (particularly interactive programming).
- Proactive outreach to political actors where necessary, including improving professional relationships with local government.
- Increased attendance at forums and agenda setting sessions where governmental drivers of development are present (possibly facilitated by TDS).
- Increased number and quality of public forum programs being aired with increased focus on development issues and community feedback.
- Creation and implementation of a monitoring mechanism at Talking Drum Studio in Liberia to ensure community radio stations are meeting obligations around the airing of high-impact radio dramas and other informational programming.
- Increase broadcast time, contingent on funding (particularly in Sierra Leone).
- More systematic incorporation of community feedback into programming and scheduling, with a particular focus on including issues relevant to women, youth, and other marginalized groups.
- Increase airtime devoted explicitly to fostering and maintaining peace.