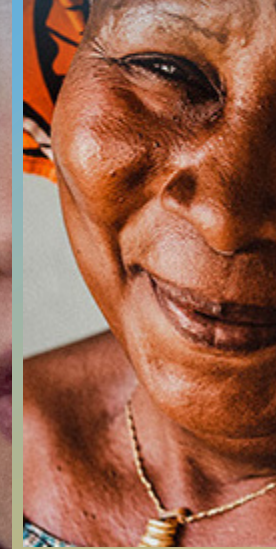
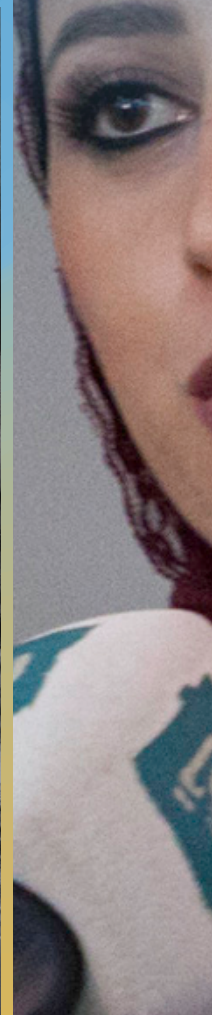


HOPE

Endures

ACTIVITY REPORT 2021

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND - AISBL



TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Being hopeful about the future has rarely been as controversial a position as it is today. Two years into a deadly global pandemic, new variants of the coronavirus keep emerging. Humanity is locked into a race to prevent the most tragic consequences of the climate crisis, while millions of people already experience its devastating effects. Violent conflicts, from Yemen to Myanmar and Niger, continue to wreak havoc on some of the world's most vulnerable people. All the while — even in parts of the world that are considered at peace — political, racial, and religious divisions seep into families and neighborhoods, destroying the bedrock of communities small and big. And yet, hope endures.

It is often said that the best of humanity manifests itself in times of struggle. We — the global community of peacebuilders at Search for Common Ground — can attest to that. In the world's most violent conflict zones, on the backdrop of the toughest global crises humanity has faced in decades, we see acts of audacity, compassion, bravery, and ingenuity — the work of heroic peacebuilders.

These peacebuilders come from all walks of life, but have one thing in common: they reject the cynical view that our divisions are too deep to overcome, the barriers between us too tall to climb. Instead, they embrace the hope of common ground.

It's in our name, and it's what we do; help supposed enemies learn to trust each other, create avenues for collaboration, and generate breakthroughs for peace.

As you will see in this report, the outcomes of this work are transformative. Despite incredibly challenging circumstances, 2021 was a year of impact for us. From mapping youth's fears and aspirations amidst political changes in Afghanistan, Myanmar or Burkina Faso, to building trust in a life-saving coronavirus vaccine, or preventing violence in communities ravaged by the Boko Haram insurgency, our work in Africa, the Middle East and Asia has impacted the lives of millions. In this report, we've brought to you a handful of illustrative stories of Search's work in some of the places on Earth most deeply affected by violence and conflict. You will see that despite the challenges, hope often can and does prevail.

2021 was also the final year of phase 2 of our 2018-2028 strategic plan: "Transformation." We continued our efforts to build strong systems, strategies and tools that enable Search's teams and partners to adapt to the changing world and conflict

In today's hyper-polarized world, the hope of common ground is the only path forward

dynamics. Amongst others, we are proud to have launched our Global Impact Framework: an innovative and adaptive tool that helps foster collaboration within the peacebuilding sector, increase our impact and demonstrate the value of investing in peacebuilding. The governance of Search for Common Ground is a key element of this "transformation" phase, and this is why we have continued the process of opening new representation offices in Palestine, Cameroon or Uzbekistan. The transformation of Search for Common Ground, from a "not for profit association" (ASBL - VZW) into an international not-for-profit organisation (AISBL - IVZW) and our new revised statutes are also important achievements of 2021. Another significant achievement of this past year is the recognition by the Belgium Government of Search for Common Ground as an "accredited civil society partner", which opens the way to a 10-year collaboration with Belgium and will allow peacebuilding to remain high on the European agenda.

With this - and many more - , we are entering 2022 ready to start phase 3 of our strategic plan: "Expansion".

None of these achievements would have been possible without you. Whether you are a supporter of Search for Common Ground, a partner in our programs, a donor, or a frontline peacebuilder yourself, know that your commitment to building a safer, healthier, more just world is making a difference. As you read on, we hope you will feel proud of the impact you are making, just as we feel grateful for you.

In today's hyper-polarized world, the hope of common ground is the only path forward.

Thank you for walking it with us.



Sandra Melone,
Chairwoman



Charline Burton,
Executive Director



WORKING TOGETHER AGAINST CORONA

The COVID-19 pandemic is not just a health crisis. It's a trust crisis, where suspicion against healthcare providers, vaccines, governments, and outsiders impedes the successful rollout of strategies against the virus. It's a political crisis, further tribalizing our ideological divides. It's a conflict crisis — the virus and the response to it exacerbating tensions and violence all over the world.

However, just like many other crises, the shared challenge of COVID-19 can open new opportunities for peace.

In this context, the work of peacebuilders is critical. Defusing mistrust, dispelling rumors, transforming violence into cooperation, and building change that lasts: that's what we do, and that's how we are helping pave the way for effective strategies to curb the pandemic. Launched in July 2020, *Working Together Against Corona* is a cross-country response program aimed at ensuring an effective and conflict-sensitive response to COVID-19.

Our teams are working at the local and national levels in Kenya, Nigeria, Palestine, Tanzania, Uganda, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Yemen. We are also coordinating a regional media campaign across six countries in the Middle East and creating connections between practitioners at the global level through ConnexUs, an innovative digital learning platform.

Our interventions focus on three main goals. Firstly, we are focusing on lessening tensions by promoting messages about social cohesion and opening up

conversations about the impact of the pandemic and the response to it. We are also fighting the spread of dangerous rumors by providing access to reliable information about the virus, the vaccine, and prevention strategies. Secondly, we are strengthening collaboration across divides to address the COVID-19 crisis and its long-term consequences. This is especially important, in light of the tensions that were generated by the initial, security-first pandemic responses in some of our focus countries. Finally, we are leading research about prevention strategies in conflict settings, as well as increasing the sharing of knowledge between peacebuilders, public health experts, and policymakers.

In the process, we are leveraging our decades of expertise in media for social change. We have produced radio dramas and talk shows about the impact of COVID-19 on education, mental health, and violence against women, and are broadcasting radio PSAs about preventive measures against the virus. We are also training media professionals and social media influencers on rumor management.

Other strategies include virtual dialogue platforms and early warning systems to increase local collaboration in the response to the pandemic, as well as art competitions that involve young people.

Through our work on the Ebola crisis in the 2010s, we learned that the messenger counts as much as the message when fighting rumors and disinformation. That's why we work closely with social media influencers, religious actors, artists, and other local influencers to achieve broad reach and engage with vulnerable groups, including minorities and refugees.

Lastly, *Working Together Against Corona* is producing research on how COVID-19 is impacting conflict dynamics — an important base of knowledge that can shape effective responses to this pandemic and future ones.

SNAPSHOTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Nigeria:

In Kano, our partner the *Center for Advocacy in Gender and Social Inclusion* established advocacy groups sharing reliable information, developing awareness campaigns for children, and introducing a referral mechanism to reduce rumors.

Uganda:

In Boroli, we are working with *Ever Ready*, a theater troupe of refugees and host community members, to create dramas tackling issues that rose during the pandemic: early marriage and pregnancy, drug abuse, theft, and school drop-outs.

Tanzania:

In Tandahimba, we are joining forces with the local *Youth Association Group* for outdoor dialogues between youth and local government about the economic decline caused by COVID-19 and the risk of violent extremism.



Kenya:

In Mombasa, we are partnering with *Sisters for Justice*, a women-led advocacy organization, to create webinars, short videos, and therapy sessions to support women's mental health during the pandemic.

Palestine:

Broadcast by our partner Nisaa FM, our radio program *Community Cohesion in the Time of Corona* is helping communities obtain reliable information about the spread of the virus, healthcare initiatives, and other consequences of the pandemic in the region.



Yemen:

In partnership with several broadcasters in Southern Yemen, we are creating radio talk shows that dispel rumors around the pandemic and provide communities with accurate information.

Myanmar:

Recipients of our small grants are leading various initiatives against COVID-19, such as renovating hospital isolation rooms, helping to set up test centers, and developing training sessions on prevention.



Sri Lanka:

Our *CyberGuardians* — a group of Search-trained social media influencers combating hate speech and online misinformation, recipients of the [2021 Common Ground Award for Media](#) — are dispelling rumors about COVID-19 and spreading information about pandemic response.

OUR INSIGHT

- Lack of citizens' trust in institutions undermines pandemic response efforts, including vaccination campaigns. Health responders, the international community, and local actors should integrate strategies to overcome trust deficits (such as engaging local, trusted leaders) into vaccination efforts.
- NGO responders often enjoy higher levels of trust than government actors; however, trust in both groups is decreasing during subsequent waves of the infection. Diversity in and collaboration between response providers can improve trust.
- People often trust traditional media and informal channels more than they do social media for information about the pandemic.
- Participatory media programming that brings together citizens, healthcare professionals, and government authorities helps create positive behavioral changes.
- Crises are shared challenges that can entrench or lessen divides. On average, 79% of respondents in our research countries value collaboration across divides to respond to COVID-19. However, secondary effects of the pandemic (economic, political, etc.) could lead to increased tensions and competition over more limited resources.

Our pandemic response programmes are financially supported by the European Union. We work hand in hand with our sister organisation Search for Common Ground in the USA, who receives support from the Skoll Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for pandemic response programmes.





LIFE AFTER BOKO HARAM: HOPE AND HOMECOMING

NIGER

Zakaria had never heard of Boko Haram until the day that his mother died.

She was visiting a humanitarian aid center when the violent extremists launched a rocket attack, killing her instantly. Two other relatives sustained serious injuries.

“I saw the bodies left by Boko Haram,” Zakaria said. “That day, I saw and understood.”

Motherless and mourning, Zakaria and his six siblings moved to the city of Diffa in southeastern Niger. Life moved on, somehow. One day, Zakaria went to buy a guitar from a friend—not realizing that the friend had joined Boko Haram and was using proceeds to fund the group. The teenaged Zakaria found himself in prison, accused of supporting the same extremists that had killed his mother.

“I just thought it wasn’t possible,” he said. “They would realize the mistake, and I would be released.”

Instead, Zakaria was transferred over 800 miles to a prison in Niamey, the capital of Niger. He spent 18 months in captivity, emerging at last into a society suspicious of his past and blind to his pain. It was then that our team in Niger entered the story.

For two years, we have run a project called *Kallo Lenio, Klla Founna*, or “Together, Let’s Move toward the Future.” Our goal is to heal and reintegrate those scarred by Boko Haram — wrongly-accused prisoners, kidnapping victims, and repentant fighters.

With funding from the European Union, we worked in nine areas, with young people drawn from Niamey prison, Kollo prison, the Goudoumaria transit center, and elsewhere. We measure success in the wounds that we bind and the hope that we seed.

In Niger, violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram pose a serious threat, often recruiting young people and launching attacks. Violence, anger, and retribution fuel each other in a destructive

cycle. Whole societies can collapse; whole lives can, too. That is why psychological support is a key part of transformation.

Alzouma is a trained practitioner who works with Search for Common Ground in Kollo prison. He recalled his early months with those affected by Boko Haram—the anxiety and hopelessness.

“I was face to face with real former combatants who had a hard time opening up to others,” he said. “Their whole lives will be shaped by this war.”

But initial despair was not destiny. Alzouma found that many people shared the same symptoms of insomnia, stress, and depression. They also asked the same questions: “Where is my family? What will I do if I come home and find out that my mother, father, and sister are dead?”

By connecting on a human level, Alzouma could reach a point of vulnerability, navigate trauma, and forge a new sense of hope. Healing could begin. This psychological process is a major reason why our impact lasts: 96 percent of participants ultimately disavow extremist groups and reject violence as “a means of action.”

Psychological growth enables economic security. We provide specialized job training to participants and connect them with opportunities. By the end of the program, 88 percent have an activity that yields a daily income sufficient to cover basic daily needs.

Overall, 84 percent of participants reported that they are “well” or “very well” integrated into society at the end. However, we are not merely working to transform individuals—we also transform the social attitudes that stereotype Boko Haram repentants as untrustworthy and dangerous.

To this end, we have held over 600 in-person activities, including 83 town hall meetings, 143 youth dialogues, and 168 theater shows to challenge exclusionary norms. One participant from the city of N’guigmi reflected on his change: “At first, I was against any initiative tending to bring back the elements of Boko Haram in communities. I intended to leave my village as soon as an ex-prisoner or repentant would come. But now [I see] that reintegration is something to support.”

Indeed, 90 percent of community members said that the project has reduced the risk of radicalization. And 88 percent reported that repentants “behave well in the community.”



90%
of the community members said that the project has reduced the risk of radicalization

96%
of participants ultimately disavowed extremist groups and rejected violence as “a means of action”

Zakaria, the 20-year-old who lost his mother in a rocket attack, is one of these participants. Like Mustapha, he took up welding after sensing a booming market.

“There is a real demand for this type of work, even in construction,” he said. “We need people who know how to work with iron.”

Some days, Zakaria finds himself working alongside ex-Boko Haram fighters. He looks down the line and remembers the day of his mother’s death, when his life changed forever. He remembers the long journey to Niamey and the year-and-a-half spent in prison.

But Zakaria has chosen a path different from bitterness. He surveys the faces of former extremists and makes his peace.

“If some of them have committed crimes and are here today among us, it is because they have understood their mistake,” he said. “I forgive them.”



ERASMUS+ VIRTUAL EXCHANGE: A COMMUNITY OF YOUNG GLOBAL CITIZENS

EUROPE AND THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange is proof that you can be ahead of the curve while trying to flatten the curve.

As educational institutions experimented with new ways to create community and foster cultural exchanges during the pandemic, the *Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange (EVE)* initiative was already facilitating cross-cultural online dialogue to build bridges between young people from different parts of the world.

EVE was established in 2018 under a contract with the European Commission, as an expansion of their celebrated *Erasmus+* program for education, training, youth, and sport.

Young people aged 18 to 30 from Europe and the Southern Mediterranean participated in facilitated online dialogues. Since its inception, the project has involved more than 33 thousand

people between participants and trainees, registering peak demand and attendance in 2020 — when *EVE* provided a one-of-a-kind opportunity for connection and growth to people kept at home by the pandemic.

“I believe in the power of empathy that virtual exchange programs are constructing, slowly paving the way for an interconnected world.”

— Hana, a student at Tunis Business School and a facilitator with *EVE*

The youth involved in *EVE* took part in many different kinds of activities. *Online Facilitated Dialogues* served as a primary mode of engagement — dialogue sessions giving diverse small groups of 8-12 participants an opportunity to engage with cultural perspectives different from their own. *Interactive Online Open Courses* were collections of pre-recorded lectures that allowed for asynchronous engagement, bolstered by weekly live facilitated sessions in which

young people could discuss the topics at hand. *Transnational Exchange Projects* offered educators and staff of youth organizations an opportunity to

“The most important thing I learned is to surround myself more with people who don’t have the same perspectives as me, to challenge myself and understand and appreciate perspectives unlike my own.”

— 20-year-old female student from the Netherlands

“My family didn’t let me go out of the country, so I tried to find anything online. It was my window for the world.”

— 28-year-old female student from Syria

OVER
250
PARTNER UNIVERSITIES
AND YOUTH
ORGANIZATIONS

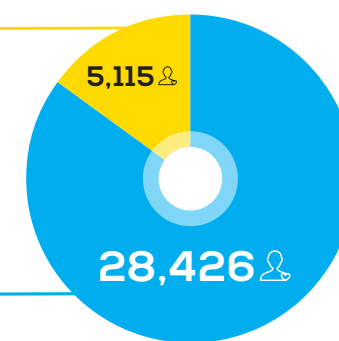
OVER
40
COUNTRIES

33,541
PARTICIPANTS AND TRAINEES



15%
trained in online dialogue facilitation, debate leadership, and the development of transnational *EVE* projects

85%
engaged in various virtual exchange initiatives



THE CONSORTIUM

- Search for Common Ground
- Sharing Perspectives Foundation
- Soliya
- UNICollaboration
- Anna Lindh Foundation
- Kiron Open Higher Education
- UNIMED
- Migration Matters

co-design virtual exchange initiatives. Finally, *Advocacy Training* helped the youth develop parliamentary debating skills with the support of trained debate team leaders.

EVE was implemented by a Search-led consortium, leveraging the deep experience of all members, including our partner organization Soliya — a pioneer in virtual exchange. By providing youth with a safe space to connect with peers abroad, *EVE* enabled them to build strong relationships across borders and develop cross-cultural understanding, empathy, and collaboration.

The participants in the program reported an enriching experience:

- 91% said that what they learned about people from other cultures was positive or very positive.
- 71% agreed that they built positive/meaningful relationships with peers from different countries and regions.
- 88% agreed that virtual exchange had a positive impact on their ability to work in a culturally diverse environment.
- 76% agreed that the exchange helped them to improve teamwork and collaborative problem-solving.

Exposed to different viewpoints in an environment where they felt heard and respected, the young people who participated in *EVE* examined their own perspectives and attitudes, developed curiosity and empathy, and increased their own self-esteem. Thanks to *Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange*, tens of thousands of young people were able to play an active role as global citizens — breaking the physical isolation imposed by the pandemic and creating an enduring digital community.





FOSTERING COLLABORATION THROUGH REGIONAL RADIO SHOW

MALI

Located in the tri-border area between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, the Liptako-Gourma region is at the crossroads of illegal activities, population displacement, inter-community conflicts, and violence carried out by violent extremist groups. Tensions are aggravated by the lack of basic government services and the proliferation of national and foreign military contingents in the area.

In this context, our team in Mali seeks to strengthen peaceful collaboration between communities, local authorities, and security forces. With funding from the French Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Etrangères, the project "Terrains d'Entente" (Common Ground) allows the creation of inclusive spaces for dialogue between border communities, local government, and security actors. The project targets community leaders committed to peace, as well as women and youth,

guiding them to becoming Peace Ambassadors. Together, they develop inclusive socio-economic initiatives and cultural activities aimed at meeting the immediate needs and expectations of the population.

In addition, we offer participatory theater plays and mobile cinema sessions to provide essential, conflict-sensitive information about peace and security issues to the communities in the target areas. These tools facilitate inclusive public discussions that encourage understanding and collaboration across dividing lines. We also produce a regional radio show, "Génération Sahel", and radio public service announcements to share local perspectives about peace and security and to promote peaceful coexistence across the Malian and Nigerien borders.



"I am fortunate to be able to sensitize my Malian brothers and sisters to peace issues."

"We couldn't stand the sound of war anymore. Gunshots were bursting all night. At dawn, we were receiving news of the families that had been attacked," tells Aïssata. She was only 13 years old when armed groups seized Ménaka, the city where she lived.

In 2012, the city of Ménaka fell under the control of armed groups. This insecurity is experienced daily by the inhabitants of Ménaka. However, to some extent, Aïssata and the other girls experience it differently. *"When we are children, we aren't fully aware of it. But as we grow up, we notice that we become more vulnerable to bandits. The risk of being kidnapped and raped is omnipresent,"* she explains.

That same year, her family decided to flee to Niger. After the town's liberation, Aïssata's family decided to return to Ménaka. However, the ongoing presence of the security and defense forces was a daily reminder that the conflict was not over. Shortly afterward, Aïssata left the town of her childhood. She moved to

Bamako to continue her studies. But, whenever she could, she would return to Ménaka to spend time with her family and friends.

"I left to increase my chances of finding a job and supporting my family, but it is at home that I am happy. Despite the situation, I feel safer among my people," she says.

In the capital, Aïssata quickly adapted to her new life. However, she managed to keep strong ties to her hometown. Indeed, as soon as she arrived, she joined an association of students from Ménaka.

Today, at the age of 20, it is with her colleagues from the association and other young people from Gao that Aïssata hosts the radio show "Génération Sahel", implemented by Search. This regional magazine, also produced and broadcasted in Niger, allows the young girl to advocate for peace.

On-air, Aïssata did not limit herself to covering the crisis but also discussed possible solutions to reduce insecurity. *"Back in Ménaka, I am proud when people ask me questions about the show. But, more importantly, I am fortunate to be able to sensitize my Malian brothers and sisters to security and peace issues."*



RESOLVE, INNOVATION, RESILIENCE: TEN YEARS IN YEMEN

YEMEN

A LETTER TO YOU

— by *Manzoor Ahmed, Country Director, and Quentin Levet, Regional Director*

In 2020 and 2021, the conflicts that have plagued Yemen grew deeper.

Violent conflict stretched toward a seventh year. A protracted humanitarian crisis left millions of people on the edge of starvation. COVID-19 piled new suffering on top of everything else.

But hope endures. Amidst the challenges, three words capture the spirit of our Yemeni peacebuilders: resolve, innovation, and resilience. Resolve, because we stayed the course and continued our life-saving work during the pandemic. Innovation, because we devised new strategies to deliver our services despite the restrictions. And resilience, because it took great courage and sacrifice from our staff.

2020 marked 10 years of work for Search - Yemen. We have grown into a team of 70 determined peacebuilders bound by a mission of preventing violence. Over a decade, we have learned the vital need for a people-centered approach. Everything rests on trust: our long presence in communities across Yemen, our trained network of Insider Mediators, our relations with authorities, and our ties to donors. While it may not appear on any financial profile, trust is our most precious asset.

The essence of peacebuilding is finding hope in dire places, and then turning that hope into lasting change. With resolve, innovation, and resilience, Search - Yemen continues to strive for this standard and serve some of the most vulnerable communities in the country.

ADAPTING TO COVID-19

The pandemic upended Yemen's strained healthcare system and challenged social relations throughout the country. Months of lockdown forced us to imagine new ways of bringing people together across dividing lines and amplifying marginalized voices.

We adapted existing programs to reflect COVID-19 restrictions, and we designed new programming to respond to the pandemic.

Online video conferencing does not work for hard-to-reach communities in Yemen, a country where internet penetration is 27%. Early in the pandemic, we pivoted to a virtual model based on WhatsApp. Using voice notes, breakout groups, polls, and adapted exercises, we were able to train 193 leaders in 12 communities as Insider Mediators — peacebuilders with the skills to resolve local conflicts exacerbated by the pandemic.

We also responded to rampant disinformation about the virus. Our team rapidly mobilized previously-trained Insider Mediators to launch a communications campaign that promoted credible information about COVID-19 and emphasized the power of collaboration in the face of the pandemic. Working with doctors across the country, we distributed over 23,000 posters, as well as social media messages, radio recordings, and videos. The Ministry of Public Health and Population supported our materials and disseminated them through their own networks. We trained health officials in conflict analysis, mediation, and facilitation skills, improving their relations with the communities and their ability to find collaborative solutions to conflicts. We also worked with Track II Diplomacy actors and health institutions to improve their ability to jointly respond to the crisis.

Our Insider Mediators also led a rapid-response intervention to distribute hygiene kits to more than 8,000 people in prisons, police stations, and other security facilities across six districts.

INSIDER MEDIATORS FOR JUSTICE

In Yemen, many women, young people, and members of the Muhamasheen minority face tall barriers when seeking access to justice.

To address this inequality, we designed collaborative action plans with communities, justice and security actors, and local government authorities. We trained 115 leaders as Insider Mediators — a cohort that included police officers, prison officials, sheiks, youth activists, journalists, and religious leaders.

Once trained, they set out to improve access to justice across the country, tackling local conflicts.

For instance, in Aden, where survivors of gender-based violence often feel uncomfortable reporting abuse, the Insider Mediators trained the police in how to tackle these cases and established a new, private space in the station that will grant those reporting the privacy they need. The survivors now feel less reluctant to seek help. The Insider Mediators also held discussions with law enforcement authorities at two large summits in Hadramout and Aden. Their training on responding to gender-based violence received an award from the local authorities and is expected to be rolled out to multiple police stations across governorates.



WOMEN

In Yemen, peacebuilding efforts often exclude a key group: young women.

Our Yemen team seeks to change that. We are training women in mediation practices, creating networks of women peacebuilders, and transforming norms around gender roles to ensure that the needs and insight of Yemeni women make it to the negotiating table.

“I did my best to prove that we [Internally Displaced People] can coexist with all communities, regardless of our educational background, race, or place of birth”

— *Thuraya Ameen, Insider Mediator and Internally Displaced Woman*

This work engages more than 300 women as Insider Mediators, leading local initiatives to transform community conflicts; national Track II Diplomacy groups involving local women leaders; local media professionals; and 16 women-led civil society organizations that are receiving our support on issues such as program management, gender sensitivity, or positive masculinity.



COOPERATIVE COMMUNITIES

Especially during crises, responsive and efficient institutions can make a community more resilient. With our *Cooperative Communities* project, we set out to revitalize social services weakened by the pandemic and the ongoing war, rebuilding trust in local government in the process.

Under this project, we trained 90 local leaders as Insider Mediators, and 69 local councilors in responsive governance.

One of the Insider Mediators, Hussein, saw how stretched resources and social services were raising tensions in Abyan, where he lives. After our training, Hussein returned to Abyan and resolved a two-year dispute over faulty waste disposal infrastructure that had prevented schools, hospitals, and water facilities from operating normally. The community set up a new waste disposal system and built a new road to allow for the safe delivery of water.

A final evaluation of the project found that many of the Insider Mediators successfully found win-win solutions for community disputes. Roughly 90% of survey respondents knew of at least one initiative led by a Search-trained Insider Mediator in their community, and 73% of them had directly benefited from them.



INSIDER MEDIATORS TRAINED

IN 2020: **488** | 2010 - 2021: **1711**

This work is supported by the European Union, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Population Fund, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and the International Organization for Migration.



A BEDROCK OF TRUST

MYANMAR

On Mar. 23, 2020, government officials in Myanmar recorded the first case of COVID-19. Many health experts believed that the disease had been circulating for weeks—by that point, Myanmar was the largest country in the world without a reported case. Even so, the COVID-19 announcement sent thousands of people to grocery stores, stocking up on essential goods with daily life about to collapse.

Exactly one year later, thousands of people gathered across Myanmar for candle-lit vigils—but not for COVID-19. In February 2021, the military of Myanmar had asserted political control, fueling a cycle of dissent, crackdown, and further dissent. On Mar. 23, 2021, people convened across the country, as they had for weeks. The bloodiest day of protests would unfold on Saturday, four days later.

Since the arrival of COVID-19, many countries have faced dire crises. Few have undergone what Myanmar has.

Yangon, the capital of Myanmar, is home to 35 Search for Common Ground staff. Drawn across ethnic and religious divides, our 42-person team has worked on the frontlines of hard situations—from armed conflict to COVID-19 to the political unrest of 2021.

Through all these challenges, peacebuilding has persisted. And so has hope.

Since 2018, we have run a project in Rakhine state so that people can identify local problems, cross divides, and collaborate with authorities. We have partnered with 11 civil society organizations and more than 70 local government officials, affecting tens of thousands of people in one of the most polarized places in the world.

The path was not simple, however. A decade ago, optimism surged when decades of military government gave way to democracy. But ethno-religious divides and armed conflict roiled beneath the surface—especially in Rakhine state, where major violence erupted in 2012, 2013, and 2017. Grievances grew, and trust in authority withered.

In 2021, the military takeover led to regular street protests and a massive strike in February—fresh chaos in a country already struggling with COVID-19. Today, after lockdown measures in Rakhine state and elsewhere, economic prospects are grim. The World Bank projects that the gross domestic product of Myanmar will shrink by 18%, with one journalist describing the economy as in “free fall.”

We are stepping into the middle of these challenges. Our project in Rakhine state equips people to address the local problems that might otherwise spark into violence—problems from access to education to COVID-19 safety.

Our work began with consultations with 35 government officials, 50 local organizations, and 180 key actors. In a country where politics can be dangerous, not many people were eager to point out problems. Thurein Tun, one researcher, noted: “Respondents feel uncomfortable with the question.” Especially in rural areas, many respondents avoided questions about the government. Others were not sure what “service provision” meant or what benefit Search for Common Ground could provide.

In June 2019, we launched the Service Delivery Fund, accepting applications from the townships of Sittwe, Ramre, Ponnagyun, and Taungup to solve local problems. That summer, we also began learning and exchange sessions for participants from different ethnic groups—Rakhine, Marama Gree, Chin, Mro, Die Nak, and more.

In many camps for internally displaced people, women struggle to access jobs and enter mainstream society. One grant proposal aimed to train women in several camps to produce hand gels and sew masks. Here was a chance to use collaboration to reduce economic barriers. We funded the project, partnering with local organizations to create new jobs.

All told, we gave out 10 grants across the fields of education, service delivery, health care, sanitation, and environmental health. The largest was more than \$50,000; the smallest was less than \$25,000.

Our method was to train people in local conflict analysis, giving them flexible tools to confront whatever problem menaced. Collaboration starts in this way, with the identification of a shared problem and courage to cooperate—from ensuring that local children can attend school to protecting an area of mangrove trees.

COVID-19 loomed large in many grants. One organization collaborated with medical officials to renovate isolation rooms in a

hospital in Ponnagyun. Another created “community-based quarantine centers” so that people could easily get tested. A third trained thousands of people on COVID-19 prevention.

While the activities varied, the core lessons stayed the same. Accomplishing any of these tasks required collaboration with local authorities—not an easy task in Rakhine, where years of violence have conditioned distrust between the population and government actors. We helped people to overcome this distrust without sacrificing personal values. Collaboration without compromise: this is what we do.

The influence of COVID-19 still lingers, with a massive surge midway through 2021. Political dynamics remain tender. But in Rakhine state, we have created 10 pockets of peacebuilding—areas where local organizations are collaborating with authorities to make critical changes.

After years of violence, peace in Myanmar can seem impossible. Our programs are seeding something more contagious than any virus: hope.

 **11**
CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS

 **70**
LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INVOLVED



 **~50,000**
PEOPLE DIRECTLY AFFECTED IN RAKHINE STATE



LET'S TALK: BETTER INFORMATION THAT EMPOWERS ALL

BURUNDI

Any healthy society depends on the presence of peace and equality. In Burundi today, disinformation, economic instability, and the continued marginalization of women are threatening the country's potential for inclusive peace.

Enter *Tuyage* — a program that is shifting Burundi's media landscape, bolstering economic entrepreneurship, and championing women's empowerment. In Kirundi, *Tuyage* means let's talk. Ultimately, that's what this initiative is all about: building a richer information environment and promoting a culture of open discussion on issues that affect all Burundians.

We started *Tuyage* in 2018, with support from USAID and in partnership with Freedom House, Catholic Relief Services, and Kahawatu. The project focuses on three issues: better access to information, improved economic discourse, and women's economic empowerment. Thanks to almost three decades of building trust in Burundi, our local peacebuilders could immediately get the interest and enthusiasm of hundreds of media professionals, young people, and women leaders, who became vital partners and participants in the project.

One of our primary goals was to expand the cadre of

professional journalists throughout Burundi — from the smallest rural communities to the largest urban centers — capable of producing free and fair high-quality reporting, especially on economic issues, and using methods that would reach Burundi's largest demographic group: youth.

Our tactics included training sessions, participatory theater, art campaigns, a national reality TV show, and radio programs. Shows like *Inkerebutsi* ("The Champion"), a radio quiz show for young Burundians in secondary school; *Tuyage Tunoganze* ("Let's Talk Deeply"), a monthly broadcast on economic issues with content submitted by journalists all across the country; or *Tuyage Ubutunzi* ("Let's Talk about Economics"), a weekly talk show combining stories from ordinary citizens with analysis by experts.

Independent evaluators found that thanks to these initiatives, the way radio stations treat economic news has changed positively. Trained journalists also reported that their technical expertise has improved. In the words of one of them: "The training allowed us to understand economic issues that the media usually don't cover but that are important for the communities."

In Burundi, as in many other societies around the

world, young people and women often experience more barriers toward economic success than older men. That's why we placed particular emphasis on their economic empowerment.

We set out to improve communication among young professionals from different social, ethnic, or religious backgrounds. To this end, we built networks of successful young entrepreneurs, so that they could integrate dialogue and rights-based approaches to economic issues. These tactics help create vital common ground in a very polarized political environment: regardless of background or status, all Burundians care about livelihoods, and open conversations about the economy can build bridges across social and political divides.

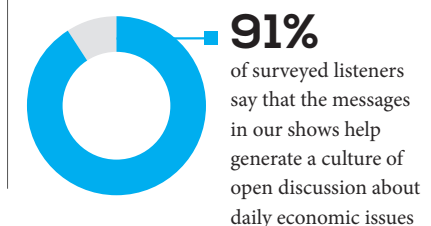
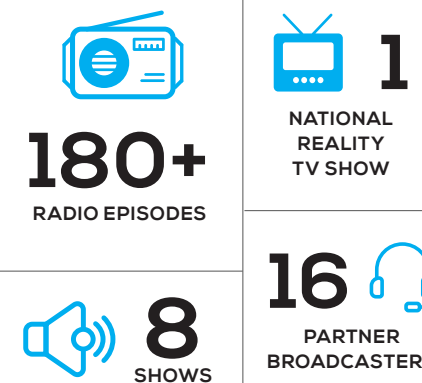
Currently, we are also running initiatives aimed at shifting the cultural barriers that limit women's rights in economic participation, such as norms restricting their ownership of property and assets.

In partnership with media and communications activists, we seek to transform public perceptions of women as economic actors. We are also cultivating their entrepreneurial skills, by supporting women-led producer associations in the coffee value chain. Alongside our partners in the project, we regularly engage with men on this issue, making change sustainable and minimizing potential backlash in the form of gender-based violence.

These activities have so far been largely successful. Independent evaluators found that women's entrepreneurship skills and access to markets have improved, and that surveyed Burundians have acquired a deeper understanding of economic issues that affect their livelihoods — which will enable them to participate meaningfully in shaping public discourse and policy.

"The world of entrepreneurship requires sacrifice, strength, and a willingness to take risks. This show has been a great opportunity for us to improve our skills and become role models for our communities."

— Vianney, a contestant in the reality show Nd'umu DG.



I'M A BOSS

Attention, fans of Shark Tank: the next great business reality show hails from Burundi.

As part of *Tuyage*, we produced *Nd'umu DG* ("I'm a Boss"), a reality show starring young Burundian entrepreneurs and telling the tale of their business ventures over the course of 12 episodes.

Nd'umu DG aired between December 2020 and February 2021. The first show of its kind in Burundi, it brought together local professionals, influencers, and celebrities to encourage youth to seek job opportunities, start their own businesses, and be positive actors for social change. From establishing detergent factories to growing chili peppers, the contestants of the show initiated business ventures across the Burundian economy. And throughout the process, the program highlighted the importance of collaboration — regardless of someone's background, ethnicity, or political views — for economic success.

Nd'umu DG was broadcast on national TV and online, alongside a national social media campaign. In order to be as inclusive as possible, we also produced a radio version of the show — with the goal to inspire future young entrepreneurs in both the major cities and the rural areas of the country with limited Internet access. Season two of Nd'umu DG is planned for 2022.

This work is generously supported by USAID through our sister organisation Search for Common Ground USA. This programme serves as the foundation for the work that Search AISBL will implement with support of the Belgian federal government in 2022-2026.

FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN

FOR PERIOD ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021
PER BNB STATEMENT APPROVED BY AUDITORS

All amounts in this report are stated in Euros.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

12.31.2021

| | EUR |
|---|-------------------|
| CURRENT ASSETS | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 9,600,383 |
| Grants and contracts receivables | 3,023,172 |
| Advances and other receivables, net | 648,645 |
| Pledges receivable | 0 |
| Advances | 0 |
| Due from SFCG Affiliate | 2,661,524 |
| Prepaid expenses | 3,884 |
| Total current assets | 15,937,608 |
| FIXED ASSETS | |
| Furniture and fixtures | 364,415 |
| Office equipment | 411,670 |
| Software and computer equipment | 50,615 |
| | 826,700 |
| Less: accumulated depreciation and amortization | -269,687 |
| Net fixed assets | 557,013 |
| OTHER ASSETS | |
| Deposit | 2,500 |
| Total other assets | 2,500 |
| TOTAL ASSETS | 16,497,121 |



CURRENT LIABILITIES

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Short term loans | 0 |
| Accounts payable | 68,605 |
| Accrued liabilities | 211,128 |
| Refundable advances | 12,449,888 |
| Provision for Loss | 472,646 |
| Other Long Term Liabilities | 555,482 |
| Total current liabilities | 13,757,749 |

NET ASSETS

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Net Assets | 2,129,016 |
| Changes in Net Assets | 610,356 |
| Total net assets | 2,739,372 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS | 16,497,121 |

Search for Common Ground's identification number in the Transparency Register is 809274824592-30.

The Transparency Register is an online tool to allow European citizens to see what interests are being represented at Union level and on whose behalf, as well as the financial and human resources dedicated to these activities.

Full copies of Search for Common Ground's annual accounts are available from the Belgian National Bank at <https://consult.cbso.nbb.be/>

Quote company number 0453.975.341



LEADERSHIP

BELGIUM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sandra Djuvara Melone (chair)
President & Founder, Neagu Djuvara Cultural Association

Patrick De Wolf
Managing Partner, DALDEWOLF

Shamil Idriss (ex-officio member)
CEO, Search for Common Ground

Dirk-Jan Koch
Chief Science Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Dutch Government

Dr. Alexandros Spachis
Ambassador of the European Union (ret.) and Secretary General, European Business Council for Africa & the Mediterranean

Ingrid Stange
Founder and Chair, Partnership for Change and the PfC Social Innovation Fund

GOVERNANCE OF THE SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND FAMILY

GLOBAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As of November 1st, 2021

Adam Berrey (chair)
CEO, PathCheck Foundation

Eric A. Berman
Executive Vice President of Public Affairs, Universal Music Group

Lesly Black
Philanthropist

Kathleen Cravero
Adjunct Professor, CUNY School of Public Health
Former Assistant Secretary General, UNDP

Abigail E. Disney
Filmmaker, Philanthropist, and Activist

Timothy Feige
Former Senior Vice President and International Insurance Group Executive, Prudential International Insurance

Jeremy S. Goldberg
President, LeagueApps

Genghis Hadi
Co-Founder and Managing Principal, Nahla Capital

Shamil Idriss (ex-officio member)
CEO, Search for Common Ground

Isaac Lee
Founder and Executive Chairman, Exile Content

Laurie Michaels
Founder, Open Road Alliance

Elizabeth Riker
Senior Partner, New Profit Innovation Fund

Ingrid Stange
Founder and Chair, Partnership for Change and the PfC Social Innovation Fund

UNITED KINGDOM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jeremy Purvis (chair)
Baron Purvis of Tweed

Shamil Idriss (ex-officio member)
CEO, Search for Common Ground

Rebecca Timms
Professional Support Lawyer

Zander Woollcombe
Director, Woollcombe Consulting

OUR LEADERSHIP IN BRUSSELS:

Charline Burton
Executive Director

Agnieszka Komoch
Director of Administration and Finance

Adrienne Lemon
Director of Institutional Learning Team

Gabrielle Solanet
Sr Programme Manager

Matilda Flemming
Sr Manager European Affairs and Partnerships

Hilde Deman
Sr Manager, Global Programmes

OUR REGIONAL DIRECTORS:

Allassane Drabo
Regional Director, West Africa

Rajendra Mulmi
Regional Director, Asia

Rebecca Besant
Regional Director, Central and East Africa

Quentin Levat
Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa

THE SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND FAMILY GLOBAL LEADERSHIP:

Shamil Idriss
Chief Executive Officer

Isam Ghanim
President

Jacqueline Oburu
Vice President, HR and Administration

Lakshitha Saji
Prelis Director, Children & Youth Programmes

Lena Slachmuis
Senior Vice President of Programmes

Mark Daley
Vice President, Chief of Development, Marketing and Communications

Michael Shipler
Vice President, Strategy and Programme Quality

Mike Jobbins
Vice President, Global Affairs and Partnerships

Wasim Khan
Vice President of Finance

Sharon Rosen
Global Director of Religious Engagement

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND'S PROJECTS ARE SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING:

GOVERNMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS AGENCIES:

Belgium Directorate General for Development cooperation and Humanitarian AID
 British Council
 Canadian Foreign Affairs
 Danida
 Directrice Regionale du Development Social et de L'Economie Solidaire du District de Bamako
 Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 European External Action Service (EEAS)
 European Union/ European Commission
 Expertise France
 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), British Government
 French Ministry of Foreign Affaires
 German Development Agency (GIZ)
 German Federal Foreign Office (FFO)
 Irish Aid
 Norwegian Foreign Ministry
 Porticus Vienna GmbH
 Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
 Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
 The Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament

INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PROJECT PARTNERS:

Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)
 Action Against Hunger
 BD-Becton, Dickinson and Chemonics
 Cordaid
 Interpeace
 International Rescue Committee
 King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID)
 Johns Hopkins University
 mediatEUr
 Mercy Corp
 Mensen Met Een Missie
 Oak Foundation
 PATRIP Foundation
 Plan International Belgium

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND FUNDS:

International Organization for Migration (IOM)
 Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
 UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)
 UN Development Programme (UNDP)
 UN High Commission for Refugees
 United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
 UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)



OUR WORK IN NUMBERS



777
EMPLOYEES



88% OF STAFF WORK IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY



ESTIMATED MEDIA REACH:

~19.2 MILLION

“Search for Common Ground’s project changed my perspective on life. I am like a ship — not built to be moored on the beach, but made to brave the ocean and face the waves.” – Ahmad Hammoud, a former inmate from Lebanon

REACH:

ARTISTS

3,224

POLITICAL LEADERS

4,368

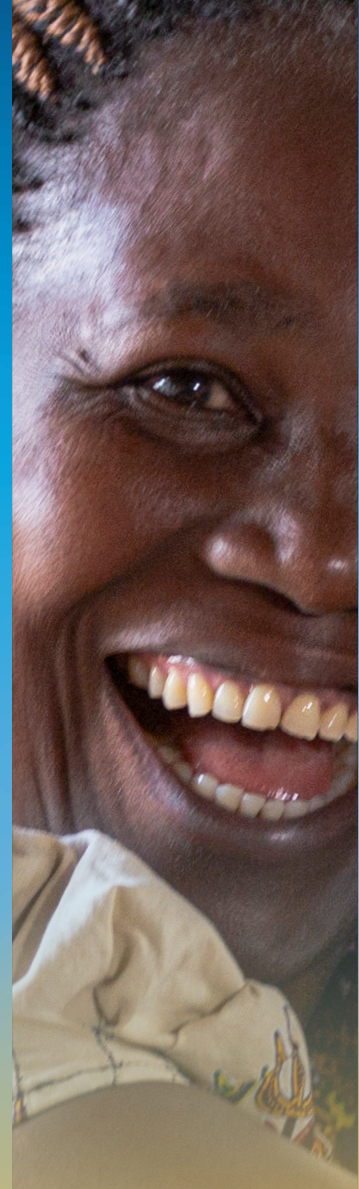
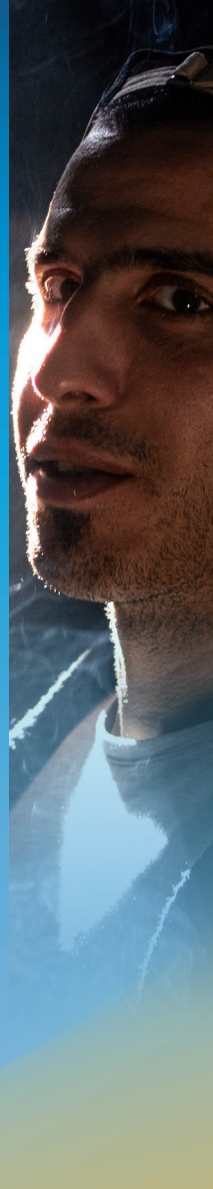
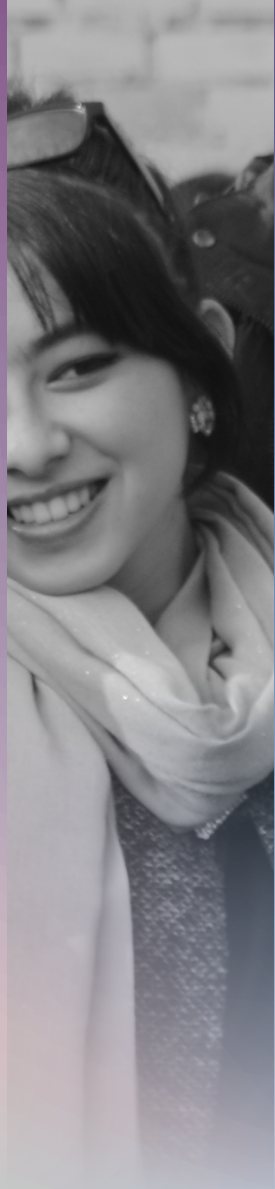
MILITARY & POLICE

7,501

RELIGIOUS LEADERS

32,790

All figures, except staffing data, relate to the Search family as a whole. Staffing data relate to Search-AISBL only



IN LOVING MEMORY OF

U MAW MAW MIN
JYLDYZ MAMATOVA
FATIMA IDRIS BULTU

Rue Belliard 205 bte 13,
B-1040,
Brussels
BELGIUM



Search for
Common Ground