

Greater Lake Chad Strategy



Search for
Common Ground
Trust, Collaboration, Breakthroughs



2021

2031

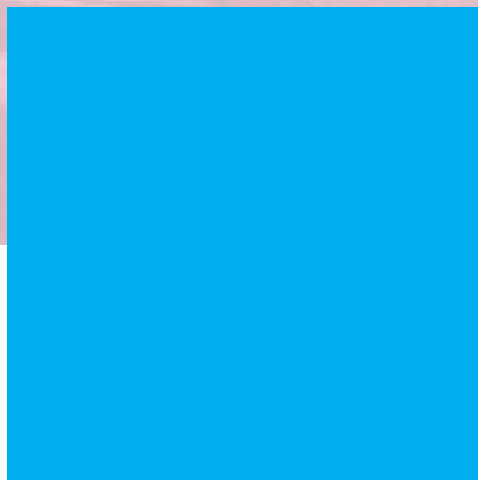


NIGER

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CAMEROON



Strategic Planning Process

As part of Search for Common Ground's (Search) organization-wide strategy, the Greater Lake Chad (GLC) region was identified as one of twelve transnational conflict geographies in which Search will focus its efforts over the coming ten years. This summary lays out Search's comprehensive strategy for the GLC region, composed of the countries bordering the Lake Chad Basin, including Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. The multidimensional and transborder dimensions of conflict in the region demand a holistic, regional programmatic, and operational strategy.

This strategy was developed through a broad consultative exercise in which Search staff engaged with a wide range of actors, analyzed conflict dynamics, and identified the geographic focus and strategic pillars of change we aim to effect. The Greater Lake Chad Strategy is closely tied to its "sister" strategy, the Greater Sahel Strategy that has similar objectives and a closely connected geographical area.

CONFLICT GEOGRAPHY

The Greater Lake Chad geography is defined as Nigeria and three of its neighbors: Niger and Chad to the North and Cameroon to the East. The borders of these four countries converge in the troubled Lake Chad Basin, a verdant but shrinking landscape, which has been affected by armed conflicts for the past decade. These four countries are closely connected through historical ties, movements of people and commerce across porous borders, and shared security and development concerns.

Nigeria, home to Africa's largest economy and population, a vibrant civil society, and a globally influential media sector, is the fulcrum of the GLC geography. It has great potential to positively shape the region's trajectory.

There is no single epicenter to the conflict in the GLC geography. Rather, it is shaped by a multitude of armed conflicts happening simultaneously, many of which reinforce one another in causal loops. Thus, this geography is bound together by a need for transnational solutions to both local and regional conflict dynamics.

Some of the key conflicts manifesting throughout the geography include:

- Insurgencies led by Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), and other organized armed groups which are centered in the regions of all four countries directly around Lake Chad, but are increasingly moving across Northern Nigeria and merging with other violent extremism dynamics in the Greater Sahel.

- Violence in the border region between North West Nigeria and Southern Niger, including resource-based conflicts, banditry/criminality, vigilantism, and emerging violent extremism.
- Intensifying farmer-herder conflicts, especially in the Nigerian Middle Belt, which are adopting increasingly political and religious overtones.
- Tumult in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger delta as well as an emergent self-determination movement in Nigeria's South Eastern region.
- A separatist uprising in Cameroon's Anglophone regions, leading to instability, displacement, and the emergence of armed groups referred to colloquially as "Amba boys" for the independent Anglophone 'Ambazonia' region they seek to establish.
- A cycle of political crises spurred by the clash between an older political generation forged in the post-colonial era and emerging political forces who believe that the legal landscape and power-sharing arrangements in place are of a bygone era.

Key trends that promise to shape the trajectory of the GLC's conflicts include **rapid population growth** and an accompanying 'youth bulge,' **climate change** and consequent economic and demographic shifts, the influence of armed actors as a political and social force, **urbanization** of young men, and **piracy and oil bunkering** in the Gulf of Guinea.

Key Drivers and Opportunities for Change



The GLC is a region rife with change and opportunity. Search has identified trends that provide positive entry points by which we will transform societies and foster sustainable peace.



Existing regional cooperation

While fraught with challenges, existing transnational cooperation serves as an entry point to address the region's interconnected conflicts. Search will work with multinational organizations responsible for natural resource and security cooperation, such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), as an entry point to foster further multi-level transnational cooperation.



A rapidly growing youth demographic

Young people have a strong desire to participate in peace processes, yet are largely excluded from doing so. A wave of youth movements across the region, such as #EndSARS in Nigeria, can be harnessed to unite diverse youth across the geography for meaningful youth-led change.



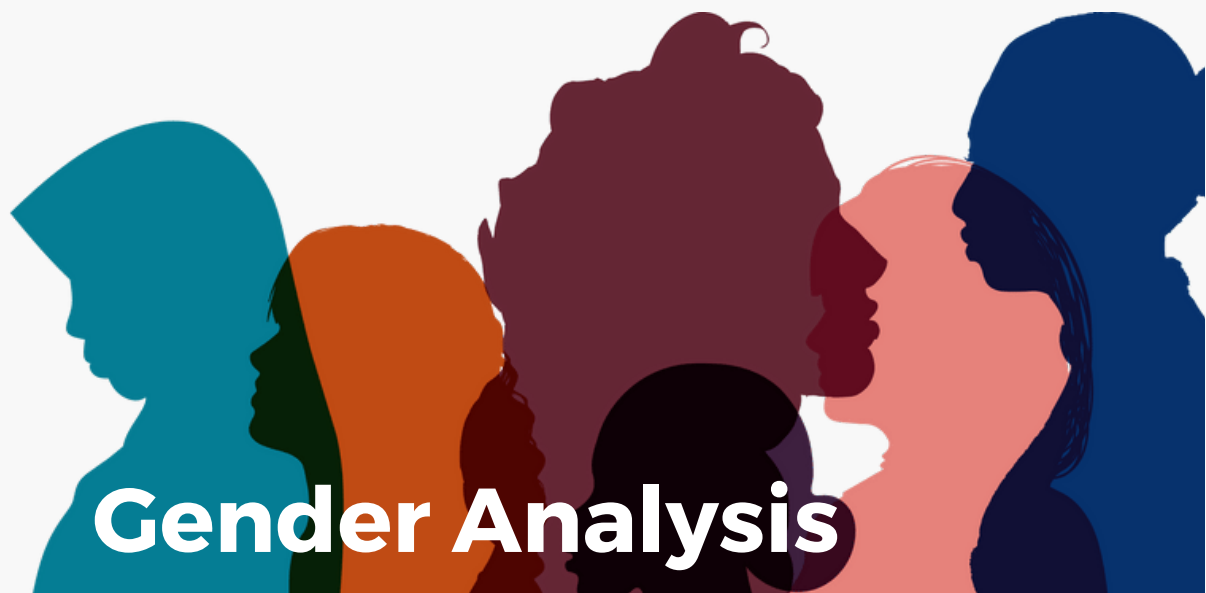
Climate change and natural resource challenges

Donors are increasingly investing in peacebuilding approaches to address climate and resource challenges. Search will build on growing international attention and investment in this area to scale up our existing programming on resource-related conflicts and to champion cross-sectoral collaboration.



Search's Peace Architecture Model

Search has pioneered an innovative peace architecture across Nigeria, which serves as a model to address a diversity of problems using the formula of collaboration between diverse stakeholder groups at the local and national levels. Search will expand this model throughout the region to address both localized and regional conflicts using a reliable formula.



The paucity of female representation in politics, women's lack of land rights and economic opportunities, and gender-based violence continue to be severe challenges in the geography. Niger ranks 154 out of 189 countries on UNDP's Gender Inequality Index, compared to 141 for Cameroon and 160 for Chad. In Nigeria, poverty, lower access to education, and poor employment outcomes disproportionately affect women and girls.

High levels of conflict and insurgency compound these challenges. The insurgency has upended men's livelihood activities, thrusting women into new roles as heads of household and decision-makers and sometimes exposing them to violence and abuse. Displacement across the region has exacerbated already high rates of intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation, harassment, and early and forced marriage.

Displaced women and girls often lack access to health, psychological, and legal services. Women also play a central role in driving conflict, both willingly and forcibly. For example, women perpetrated 50% of suicide bombings between 2011 and 2017 in the GLC region, turning them into objects of fear and suspicion within communities. In the Niger Delta, Search's assessments show that women play a key role in cult violence, often providing intelligence and hideouts for cult groups and their weapons.

Similarly, in Cameroon's North West and South West regions, women diaspora leaders call for violence and provide resources to armed groups. Meanwhile, militias enlist women to provide both combat and non-combat support. Whether willing or forced, women and girls associated with armed groups face stigma and challenges reintegrating into communities.



Strategic Objectives and Results

In order to address conflict dynamics in this geography, Search has defined four overarching strategic objectives to be pursued over the next ten years:

01

To facilitate multi-level collaboration among stakeholders to implement transformative and equitable natural resource management.

02

To enable youth to become critical partners in driving sustainable peace and socio-economic development across the Greater Lake Chad Basin.

03

To drive security sector reform that results in a professional, coordinated security apparatus that utilizes the Common Ground Approach* for improved citizen security as well as feeds into broader justice sector reform.

04

To facilitate an inclusive political and socio-economic culture.

*The CGA is a proven, experiential methodology that helps participants understand how to critically analyze conflict dynamics, understand the incentives of collaboration, and enable their ability to identify common interests and advance mutually beneficial solutions to conflict and security challenges.



Objective 1: To facilitate multi-level collaboration among stakeholders to implement transformative and equitable natural resource management.

A significant proportion of conflicts in the region stem from increasing competition over natural resources, including grazing land, water, and extractives. This competition has manifested in particularly devastating conflicts between farmers and herders. Climate change will only exacerbate these challenges as natural resources become even more scarce.

To tackle the multifaceted challenges of natural resource management, Search will work on research on the intersection between conflict and climate change, community-level management of natural resources, economic adaptation to climate change, and addressing changing migratory patterns. Work under this strategic objective is fundamentally in line with the Humanitarian Development Peace (HDP) Nexus approach.

Key Driving Factors of Conflict

Inequitable resource management has fomented grievances against mining companies and governments and led to militarized competition between farmers and herders over limited resources. Climate change will only exacerbate these tensions in the coming years.

Work under this objective will have four sub-objectives:



Facilitate community-level collaboration involving a representative cross-section of actors to enable effective utilization of natural resources.



Promote social cohesion in communities affected by new migration patterns and large-scale population movements, and integrate youth-focused social cohesion efforts into urban development strategies



Enable collaborative local resource management which ensures that decision-making about land, water, and other natural resources is done equitably and through processes that bring people together from across dividing lines by strengthening local institutions for dispute resolution and resource allocation.



Shape livelihood and economic adaptation exercises, including restructuring of local, national, and regional economies and influential markets, so that they drive people (especially youth) towards collaboration across dividing lines.

Geographic Focus:

This objective will be implemented in areas experiencing resource pressures (such as desertification in North West and North East Nigeria and rising sea levels in South West Nigeria), communities along migration routes (North-South corridors of Chad, transhumance routes of Sudan-Chad-Nigeria), sites of extractive industry (North West and Southern Nigeria, Middle Belt), and urban centers (Lagos, Port Harcourt and Yaoundé).





Programmatic Approaches:

- Direct appropriate resources to youth-led groups and organizations by mobilizing regional support for an array of youth leaders.
- Peer-to-Peer Models for connecting youth within and across communities and countries by cultivating and building upon youth groups and networks and reaching out to influential youth in target communities.
- Advocacy and Partnership Campaigns with key government leaders, national and local state institutions, and private sector actors to increase their investment in youth leadership and development.
- Gender-sensitive Approach that recognizes the needs, desires, and grievances of different genders and amplifies the voices of women and girls.



Key Measures:

- ☒ Change in the perception of youth as legitimate and active peace and changemakers.
- ☒ Investment in new youth-focused initiatives and policies.
- ☒ Youth report having adequate socio-economic and leadership opportunities.



Incremental changes:

_____ Over the next two years

Search will focus on public information campaigns and opening doors for new conflict management approaches in formal policy.

_____ Within five years

Search will improve citizen political engagement, pushing populations to reject identity politics and policymakers to cooperate on transnational issues.

_____ In ten years

Search will support national and regional policies and practices that include multidimensional identities, address conflicts transnationally, and integrate diverse traditional conflict resolution practices.

Objective 2: To enable youth to become critical partners in driving sustainable peace and socio-economic development across the Lake Chad Basin region.

The GLC region's large youth population represents an immense opportunity to build peace and youth have shown a commitment to positively shaping their communities for peace and progress, but this requires young people's inclusion in peace processes.

Currently, young women and men are not part of decision-making processes, and face high levels of unemployment and marginalization—a combination of factors that fosters grievances easy for insurgent groups and malign actors to exploit.

Search will harness the power of the Common Ground Approach to enable a generation of young women and men to be effective leaders in their communities and reach across dividing lines. Social and economic reintegration of youth formerly associated with extremist groups, vigilantes, or other security groups will be another pillar of this objective.

Key Driving Factors of Conflict

Insecurity and youth marginalization across the region leave youth vulnerable to manipulation, recruitment, and targeting by malign actors, criminal gangs, or armed groups. Research shows that overlapping exclusions, such as exclusion from social, economic, or political life, as well as horizontal inequalities, experiences of injustice, and identity factors are more relevant explanations for youth participation in violence than lack of education or employment.

Work under this objective will have eight sub-objectives:



Elevate the role of diverse youth, including educated, uneducated, and youth formerly associated with armed groups to lead and drive peace initiatives in their communities.



Support youth network building, youth-led research, and youth-led policy and advocacy to operationalize Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) across the region.



Ensure that youth are valued as critical partners in key peace and governance processes by power holders and elders.



Partner with existing youth champions such as youth CSOs, parents, teachers, and religious leaders to support youth empowerment.



Catalyze intentional and sustained private sector, institutional, and governmental understanding, respect for, and investment in youth.



Enable positive behavior change and norm transformation to transform perceptions of youth, especially young women.



Promote Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support amongst vulnerable youth.



Streamline intergenerational engagement and youth leadership throughout this strategy.



Geographic Focus:

Given the fast-growing youth demographic across the region as well as youth participation in diverse forms of violence in all affected countries, this objective is region-wide.



Programmatic Approaches:

- Direct appropriate resources to **youth-led groups and organizations** by mobilizing regional support for an array of youth leaders.
- **Peer-to-Peer Models** for connecting youth within and across communities and countries by cultivating and building upon youth groups and networks and reaching out to influential youth in target communities.
- **Advocacy and Partnership Campaigns** with key government leaders, national and local state institutions, and private sector actors to increase their investment in youth leadership and development.
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Key Measures:

- ☒ Change in the perception of youth as legitimate and active peace and changemakers.
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- ☒ Youth report having adequate socio-economic and leadership opportunities.



Incremental changes:

_____ Over the next two years

Search will invest in expanding our strategic capabilities, methodologies, and approaches.

_____ Within five years

There will be an increase in the investments made by the private and public sectors to empower and partner with young men and women for socio-economic advancement and peace across the region.

_____ In ten years

Youth will be seen as legitimate and necessary partners for peace across the GLC region, which will be reflected in the way governments, the private sector, communities, and international actors engage youth

Objective 3: To drive security sector reform that results in a professional, coordinated security apparatus that utilizes the Common Ground Approach (CGA) for improved citizen security

Many security actors, both formal and informal, are viewed by citizens as actors to be feared, avoided, or fought against, as in Nigeria's EndSARS movement against police brutality.

To combat this view and to create a security apparatus that is citizen-centered, Search will work with formal and informal security actors to reduce securitized responses to conflict in order to mitigate citizen grievances towards security services and prioritize sustainable Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRR) approaches, especially for informal actors.

Inclusive, transparent, and conflict-sensitive programming is necessary to overcome the environment of distrust that surrounds DDRR processes. Additionally, we will develop a partnership strategy with local actors, peer organizations, and traditional and formal institutions to connect efforts with wider justice sector reform, recognizing that grievances around

widespread impunity and lack of accountability will continue to reinforce historical cycles of violence if left unaddressed.

Key Driving Factors of Conflict

Heavy-handed, militarized responses are the predominant strategy for governments to combat insecurity and VE, both nationally and regionally. Corruption, militarization, and abuse within the security sector have fueled distrust and resentment amongst populations, sometimes manifesting in recruitment into extremist groups, armed insurgencies, or self-defense groups.

Work under this objective will have four sub-objectives:



Transform the security sector from a feared institution to a trusted partner by shifting the culture of the security sector towards one of collaboration and citizen-rights using a strong gender lens to ensure equitable access.



Place citizens' needs at the center of the security apparatus by fostering the understanding that security provision should be designed to protect citizens' rights and improving responses to gender-based violence and access to related services.



Implement DDRR Processes for Informal Security Actors and former insurgents to avoid recidivism and ensure community acceptance and buy-in.



Contribute to wider justice sector reform through a strategic partnership model with local CSOs, formal and informal justice institutions, and peer organizations.

Geographic Focus:

This objective is relevant across large swaths of the conflict geography. We will work with central governments on Security Sector Reform (SSR), targeting capital cities (Abuja, N'Djamena, Niamey, and Yaoundé), as well as engage units deployed across the region: Northern Nigeria, Middle Belt, Northern Cameroon, Diffa, Chad, ECOWAS Sub-Region.





Programmatic Approaches:

- **Multi-level Peace Architecture, Partnership Building & Advocacy** with government and security sectors to advocate for positive security outcomes.
- **Holistic DDDR Processes** that provide equal support to ex-combatants and target communities to promote community support and buy-in for reintegration processes.
- **CGA Training** on non-adversarial, cooperative decision-making and leadership to imbue the security sector with core CGA tenets.
- **Partner** with local and traditional actors working on justice sector reform to **integrate SSR and DDR programming approaches** into the broader security and justice field.



Key Measures:



CSSR participants cite the CGA as necessary for effective peace and security efforts.



Citizens report improved collaboration and trust with security forces.



Citizens report improved levels of satisfaction and inclusiveness in security services.



Incremental changes:

_____ Over the next two years

Search will focus on improving the capacities and community relationships of security actors across the region.

_____ Within five years

Search will further integrate the CGA into security apparatuses and begin to shift policing approaches to more civilian and community-focused responses while supporting the reintegration of former combatants.

_____ In ten years

Search will have enhanced trust in the security sector and facilitated the peaceful reintegration of former fighters and informal security forces.

Objective 4: To facilitate an inclusive political and socio-economic culture.

From the local to state levels, state structures across the geography have struggled to create an inclusive political climate. Youth, women, and vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees have very little influence in decision-making, thereby creating exclusionary identities that result in violent conflicts across the region.

To grapple with this challenge, Search will advocate for the integration of traditional and community-based approaches into governance structures and formal policy, improve community resilience to conflict and the manipulation of identity, and build connections between state governments across the region to facilitate unified responses to shared challenges and priorities.

Key Driving Factors of Conflict

Identity politics and political marginalization based on religious and ethnic identity are relatively common throughout this geography. Competition over land tenure and natural resources has contributed to linguistic, ethnic, and religious divides with destabilizing spillover effects.

Work under this objective will have four sub-objectives:



Folding in inclusive traditional conflict management processes into policy generation and implementation.



Fostering connections across borders to enable a unified response to security threats and to mitigate conflict spillover effects.



Build public support for rejecting the manipulation of identity as a means of dividing electorates and mobilizing groups against one another for political gain.



Improving women, youth, and marginalized groups' inclusion in leadership spaces and decision-making.

Geographic Focus:

This objective will be implemented over large swaths of the conflict geography, as conflicts driven by lack of inclusive and responsive governance are pervasive. The primary areas of focus are: the Niger Delta, the Middle Belt, North West Nigeria and the Maradi Region of Niger, and North East Nigeria and the Diffa region of Niger.





Programmatic Approaches:

- Improvement of community **resilience to conflict and manipulation** by strengthening traditional and formal dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **Capacity building** for state officials on inclusive policy formulation and implementation.
- Media initiatives to challenge identity politics by depicting role models who embrace their multifaceted identities and debunking identity-based stereotypes.
- Coalition and capacity building for marginalized groups to ensure inclusion in political processes in the region.



Key Measures:



Communities report increased representation and satisfaction in their government.



Population believes decision-making is inclusive and responsive to people of all sexes, ages, disabilities, and population groups.



Incremental changes:

_____ Over the next two years

Search will focus on public information campaigns and opening doors for new conflict management approaches in formal policy.

_____ Within five years

Search will improve citizen political engagement, pushing populations to reject identity politics and policymakers to cooperate on transnational issues.

_____ In ten years

Search will support national and regional policies and practices that include multidimensional identities, address conflicts transnationally, and integrate diverse traditional conflict resolution practices.



To achieve this strategy's objectives, Search will partner with a diversity of actors, including:

- Government agencies, at the national, sub-national, and local levels, to strengthen accountability, conflict prevention and response capacities, resource management, and governance, and to facilitate international cooperation on transborder issues.
- Regional security actors and multilateral institutions, to facilitate the formation and effective implementation of cross-border cooperation frameworks.
- International NGOs, to integrate conflict sensitivity into multi-sectoral interventions operating at the HDP nexus, simultaneously addressing numerous conflict drivers.
- Grassroots organizations and civil society networks, to build bottom-up support for change, strengthen networks, integrate local community needs into the design and evaluation of programs, and ensure the sustainability of impacts.
- Youth-led organizations, to elevate their status and influence in the region, to amplify youth voices in decision-making, and to empower youth to enact sustainable change in their communities.
- Private sector actors, to minimize negative conflict externalities from private enterprise, especially those emerging from extractive industries, and to counter the spread of digital misinformation and hate speech.
- Researchers, especially local and youth researchers operating in the peace and security fields, to inform program design and implementation, and to create coalitions across the region of local practitioners and researchers.
- Media, including community and national print and radio actors, to produce and disseminate conflict-sensitive and peace-affirming content.





Search has been operating in the Greater Lake Chad Basin for more than 15 years. At the time of drafting, we have 15 projects across the region, totaling more than \$15 million. Our funding portfolio includes a rich diversity of donors and partners. We employ both innovative and well-established peacebuilding approaches and methodologies in the Lake Chad Basin, including social and behavioral change media, community-based peace architecture, digital listening and response, and early warning/early response mechanisms.

Search's research initiatives and programmes position us as thought leaders on key topics such as Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), DDDR, farmer-herder conflict, religious engagement, youth empowerment, and conflict sensitivity. We have also emerged as a leader in cultivating dialogue and engagement on the HDP nexus, developing tailored research and conflict assessments for humanitarian and development partners to ensure the relevance and sensitivity of planned interventions to the context

Nigeria



Nigeria is one of Search's largest country programs, with a portfolio of over \$9 million. Our programming spans the country, reaching 22 of 36 states. We are one of the few peacebuilding NGOs operating in the North West regions. As one of the first organizations to launch peacebuilding programming in the Middle Belt, Search has established a reputation as the go-to expert on farmer-herder conflicts.

We have a large and long-term presence in the North East, as well, with flagship programming on DDDR, CVE, and at the HDP nexus, and are one of very few international organizations operating in the Northwest geopolitical zone, with an office in Katsina and operations in Sokoto and Zamfara

Niger



Search has worked in Niger since 2011. With over \$15 million in funding, including over \$6 million for the Diffa region, Niger is Search's largest portfolio. Our work in the Diffa region, beginning in 2015, centers on youth engagement, DDDR, CVE, and civilian security. Search's flagship programming to support the reintegration of over 500 ex-combatants and individuals associated with Boko Haram presents an opportunity to scale up reintegration programming regionally.

Moreover, our work in Diffa has established local peace architectures by fostering mutual trust and collaboration between authorities, security and defense forces, and communities. Through our years-long partnership with UNHCR, Search has prevented and transformed conflict between displaced and host communities in Diffa and Tillaberi.

Cameroon



In Cameroon, Search has done extensive relationship-building with donors, partners, and civil society actors in Yaoundé, Dakar, and Washington. We work closely with our local partners to empower young people and women to prevent and transform conflict and promote inclusivity in peace processes. Finally, while Search no longer has a presence in Chad, our previous programming from 2011-2018 provides a foundation to build on.

Chad



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Search for Common Ground

Trust, Collaboration, Breakthroughs

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

Search for Common Ground (Search) is an international organization committed to conflict transformation.

Since 1982, Search has led programs around the world to help societies transform the way they deal with conflicts, away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative solutions. With more than 600 staff and 1200 partners in 43 countries around the world, our programs reach more than 5 million people each year.

Using our Common Ground Approach, we work in many of the world's most difficult conflict environments, including situations of widespread violent conflict, to prevent and mitigate violence, empower local and national actors to build peace, and support reconciliation.

We do this by supporting inclusive dialogue and dispute resolution processes, developing media programs that promote fact-based public information and tolerance, and strengthening collective and community actions that solve local challenges.



Dakar, West Africa Regional Office

Ngor Almadies, 13 Bis, rue NG 96, BP29621, Dakar SENEGAL



Washington, DC Headquarters

1730 Rhode Island Ave. NW, Suite 1101 Washington, DC 20036 USA



Brussels Headquarters

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



Website

www.sfcg.org