



Communicating for Peace: A Social and Behaviour Change Communication Initiative in South Sudan

Introduction

South Sudan is home to more than 60 different ethnic groups. Cattle are the main source of livelihood for many of these tribes. Although cattle raiding is deeply rooted in South Sudan's history, it has intensified as a result of the economic and political insecurity caused by the 2013 political crisis. The intensity has also increased due to the uncontrolled availability of guns to civilians, triggering cycles of revenge killings. Disputes over migration patterns and access to water are another source of tension between pastoralist and farming communities. This has divided the communities in South Sudan along tribal lines.

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) partnered with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and carried out a social and behavioural change communication initiative to promote social cohesion and peaceful resolution of the conflict between South Sudanese individuals and communities.

SFCG is committed to helping those in conflict to identify and utilise non-violent options to resolve their problems and address their challenges peacefully. This to be achieved through strategic communication and dialogue. Therefore, this intervention was to address the challenges of social cohesion among individuals and communities in South Sudan.



INTERVENTION AREA

Conflict prevention, resolution and peace building



LOCATION

Western Bahr el Ghazal state (Wau), central Equatoria State (Juba) and Jonglei State (Bor)-South Sudan



STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

- SFCG and the UNICEF community leaders, religious leaders; funded by the United State Agency for International Development (USAID), community members
- Youth in conflict affected areas

Methodological Approach

Training media practitioners

Many journalists in South Sudan are untrained journalists who learned on job and have never had training on conflict-sensitive reporting. Therefore, teaching conflict-sensitive reporting will improve local reporting. The training includes the production of attractive radio programme on the topic of peace.

This strengthens the communication channel and creates a platform to promote diverse and constructive dialogue that leads to reconciliation and peace between individuals and communities.

Trainings covered 5Ws and 1H (who, what, where, why, and how), how to analyse and understand conflict and how to deal with tribal division.

Training religious leaders

Religious leaders were trained to focus on identifying verses in the scriptures linked to peaceful coexistence and peacebuilding. They were also taught how to adapt their preaching to the South Sudanese context, and to use examples that are related to the local community life.

Radio for peace building (*Hiwar al Shabab and Sergeant Esther*)

The radio for peace building initiative was aimed at identifying common interests that go beyond ethnicity and religion. A talk show among the youth (*Hiwar al Shabab*) was to provide a platform for the youth to discuss the drivers of conflict in their communities and a radio drama was aired on how to solve conflict in communities through peaceful dialogue and speak up against the misuse of power.

Results

- Media practitioners are posting reconciliatory messages on social media. It is now more common for trained reporters to invite chiefs, religious leaders or members of the South Sudan Peace Commission (SSPC) to discuss conflict resolution and other relevant topics with the local community with the aim of building peace among communities.
- Most of the trainees, upon completing the trainings, have the capacity required to report conflict situations in a way that promotes peace and discourages further violence.
- Social cohesion was strengthened at community level. This is due to significant change in identity to nationalism rather than tribes and clans. These changes were driven by changes in Bor and Wau where few identified with national identity level in January 2015 (2.8 and 7.8 percent compared to 49 and 75.2%) in the final evaluation. This will help prevent conflicts and reinforce the peaceful coexistence between communities and individuals in South Sudan.

There was general improvement with regards to social cohesion and conflict resolution particularly in Wau, Although Bor County saw improvement in social cohesion, it continued to feature more negative results than other project locations. This suggested that there was a general positive impact of project activities. In addition, project activities were largely seen as effective in fostering peacebuilding among local communities. Respondents held particularly positive views about the role of *Hiwar al Shabab* in the promotion of peacebuilding.

Constraints

The sustainability of the trainings, theatre performances and divergent expectations and miscommunication within the UNICEF-SFCG partnership were highlighted as the weak links in the implementation of the programme. Despite this, research participants underscored the potential of media as a useful tool for peacebuilding.

Sustainability

- Allowing communities to discover solutions to their conflict instead of trying to impose a solution and giving them the tools to take ownership of projects contributes to the sustainability of an action.
- Working through local stakeholders ensures that there is ownership of the solution, and thus enhancing the credibility of the participating community actors so that they can continue to address local problems beyond the life of a specific intervention.
- The trained reporters have gained skills that will enable them to report conflict issues responsibly beyond the project time and the religious leaders will continue to preach peaceful coexistence among the community.

Replicability

- Expand strategic context assessment and conflict analysis programme to reach more communities in conflict areas in need of peaceful coexistence.
- Acknowledge that dispute resolution mechanisms and preferred community-based peace initiatives vary across the country; activities should therefore be adapted according to the context of a particular community.
- Increase creative strategies to more hard-to-access locations and populations. By organising radio talk and theatre shows to inform people in conflict situations, especially the youth, about conflict resolution through dialogue. This could be directed through local radios in each community. In a participatory theatre, collection of stories from the community shape the narrative of the performance relevant to that community and its residents.

Additional information

<https://www.sfcg.org/south-sudan/>
<https://www.sfcg.org/south-sudan-madi-acholi/>
<https://www.sfcg.org/performing-miracles/>

CONTACTS

JOSEPH F. CORCORAN
jcorcoran@sfcg.org

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD)
P. O. Box 2653, Djibouti City, Djibouti | www.igad.int / www.resilience.igad.int



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations