



Conflict and Crisis

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Using Arts, Music, and Sports to Build Peace

Chemonics has used art, music, and sporting events to foster dialogue and increase empathy in fragile communities that have been affected by violence. The first, most difficult step in conflict resolution is often getting people to talk and listen to each other. A sporting event can be a great place to bring groups together and to encourage conversations between local communities through informal, enjoyable experiences that highlight shared interests and values.

Similarly, members of vulnerable and traumatized groups often find telling their stories through art, music, dance, and filmmaking a valuable outlet that promotes healing after conflict. These activities can also help viewers and audiences in the community to gain greater empathy for their experiences. They can provoke emotional reactions that often catalyze understanding and willingness to resolve differences. Below we describe two examples of our work in artistic outreach to build peace and understanding in conflict-affected communities.

Program Highlights

Côte d'Ivoire Transition Initiative 2



Facilitating peace and reconciliation was a daunting task for Ivorian authorities and civil society after the violent 2010 elections. The USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) Côte d'Ivoire Transition Initiative 2, implemented by Chemonics, addressed this challenge in part by drawing upon the power of music and art in Ivorian youth culture to disseminate messages of nonviolence.

In partnership with a local organization, the project engaged young people to work with nationally known singers to choreograph a dance to a song and perform it for the community. The song conveys messages of public spirit, citizenship, and tolerance, including lyrics such as, "I'm young, I'm a citizen/I'm giving my voice for my country, my future."

The project also supported public concerts to promote tolerance and coexistence through song and dance. Ivorians speak nearly 80 languages, and the project used many local dialects to reach vulnerable populations and youth. Another activity helped students create community murals illustrating the importance of peaceful participation in the upcoming election. A monitor at every mural site explained the project's objectives to passersby and invited them to sign a pledge to participate peacefully in the election. The murals promoted peace and public discussion among a population with low literacy rates, helping to make them more resistant to political manipulation.

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