

Learning by Ear

Civil Society and Political Commitment

No. 10 Reconciliation – Liberia

Sound : Stephanie Duckstein

Editor : Yann Durand

Translation : Anne Thomas

1 Female off voice (Feature-Text + Outro)

2 Fictional characters (Intro+ Dialogue) :

- **Philomène (name can be changed) :** young woman who knows a lot of things, Alphonse's big sister

- **Alphonse (name can be changed) :** young man who is more naive and asks lots of questions, Philomène's little brother

- Voices for voice-overs:

Victor Tamafaia -- 19-year-old man

Philipp Wargaif -- 18-year-old man

Stephen Kendema -- 30-year-old man

Teaser LbE

INTRO :

Philomène :

Hello Alphonse! Hello everybody!

Alphonse :

Hello Philomène.

Philomène :

Welcome to our Learning by Ear series about civil society and political commitment.

Alphonse :

What are we talking about today?

Philomène :

About the people's reconciliation after bloody conflicts. You know, young people are often very traumatized by these events -- sometimes they are involved in them themselves.

Alphonse :

Are you talking about child soldiers?

Philomène :

Yes, that's one example. It's very different to reintegrate into a society with such a history. Listen to this report about a reintegration and reconciliation project in Liberia.

Reportage

1. SFX : Festival

Reporter :

Liberia has been marked by a long civil war.

2. Clip: Tamafaia (engl.)

“Oh, in exile I've been in Jembe camp, in Jembe camp Sierra Leone, I came back last month. I feel very much glad, I am very much happy to be home at this time, I feel very much happy to see my country, to see the development going on, I feel very much glad.”

Reporter :

Victor Tamafaia is 19 years old. Like lots of young Liberians of his age, he fled the conflict and now he only wants one thing -- to create a life for himself in a peaceful country. That's why the development he talks about is so necessary. It's a development that is taking place thanks to changes in people's way of thinking, thanks to the population coming closer together.

3. SFX discussions between children

We are in Foya, a small town in the north of the country where three states meet -- Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The town reflects the results of well over a decade of conflicts: there is no running water, no electricity. The war destroyed the local radio station and there is an unemployment rate of 85 percent. But there is also a center for young people.

Alphonse :

It must be terrible to be torn away from one's life from one day to the next!

Philomène :

And since we're talking about half a million people, I can't even imagine the living conditions in the refugee camps. But what's worse is the lack of prospects, the amount of children that have had to stop their schooling because of the war!

Alphonse :

And without school it's hard to get training, to find a job and found a family!

4 SFX : Peace Carnival

Reporter :

Foya is doing everything to rediscover the joy of living despite the problems faced by much of the population. The so called peace carnival brings people together around the theme of reconciliation. Young people such as the 18-years-old Phillip Wargaif have put all their hopes in it:

5 Clip Wargaif (engl.)

“I’m celebrating the peace carnival for 2008 -- we should come together. Maybe if we are together like this we make life easy and things have been very good and we come together and we unite ourselves, yeah I can say that for something like 14 years there was fighting but there was no peace. Now we have peace, we are enjoying peace now.”

Reporter :

Foya has not been left alone to rebuild itself. GTZ, a German international cooperation enterprise for sustainable development, has set up a project to help people through sport. Through football in particular. But the sport itself is not the only thing that matters, says the trainer Stephen Kendema.

6 Clip Kendema (engl.)

“Yeah we are training referees and it’s part of our program, it’s part of our project. We train referees in managing a football game. In observing infringements on the field, the various rules, trying to make sure that the players are observing and respecting the rules of the game and makes sure that the match goes on peacefully and successfully. That is what we do but also what we have been doing is to understand that the games he’s

officiating... those that are playing... some of them are ex-combatants, and so when he's refereeing he has to be sensitive of that as well. Sometimes, there are agitated easily, they are angered easily, so you have to know the rules of the game."

Reporter:

The 30-year-old trainer knows what is needed: a rigid framework. Strict rules that are applied impartially are the best remedy. They are the best way of giving lost teenagers a focus after all the trauma they've gone through. And the only way of avoiding explosions of violence during the match is to make sure the referee knows the rules -- that way he cannot be attacked.

7. SFX: child crying

Reporter:

At the beginning of the project, there were constant outbursts of violence. But now the project is also about educating those at the other end of the whistle -- the players:

8. Clip: Kendema (engl.)

"And also, we help them, we help the players also to understand the rules of the game. For me it's on a line with democracy because you are understanding between what is wrong and right, accepting defeat as well, you know, you are playing, it's a game, one position wins, one position loses. And you know their lives are being reformed in a way, it's all providing training..."

Philomène (annoyed):

This all sounds good and fine but once again it seems to be only about boys!

Alphonse :

Why do you say that? Girls also play football but generally they fight less -- that's all! And anyway before you start, just listen to the end of the report:

9. SFX : women singing

Reporter:

It's a song that evokes reconciliation. Women are in the front line at the peace carnival. Which is not the case elsewhere. Stephen Kendema complains that it's hard to get girls to take part in the project:

10. Clip: Kendema (engl.)

"You have to encourage them to come but they wouldn't come of their own will. And this owes a lot to our culture and tradition and practices: women are always cooking, they're always preparing food, they are doing housework and the men are there to discuss public issues, attend meetings and so on and so forth. So when you go to the communities the women are behind and the men are in front. Even at kickball you get girls playing kickball. Only few follow the kickball game, they can't talk about having an interest in it, only very few."

Reporter :

So the trainers have to show perseverance and conviction to get the young girls to make the move. Sometimes they spend a night and a day in the village to convince them of how important sport is:

11. Clip: Kendema (engl.)

“We tell them that it exposes -- people see you and they know who you are and you are getting your body fit. It’s like you are taking part in something but participation becomes something for you. So these are things that we tell them we do encourage them. Sometimes we take a lady who plays kickball very well, we take her to the community to show them how to play the game.”

Reporter :

Helping the young girls to be more self-confident is a huge but essential challenge in a society where 75 percent of women have at least once in their life been victims of sexual violence. If the reconstruction is to be successful and sustainable, the population has to become psychologically healthy. Women play a crucial role, especially when it comes to educating children:

12. SFX: Percussions

Reporter :

But if Foya’s girls have to become more confident this is not the case for many of the boys. The end of the peace carnival will be marked by a match between two local schools. Victor Tamafaia hopes to win but says that the symbolic day has another aim:

13. Clip: Tamafaia (engl.)

“Bringing peace to Liberians and other people as we are united. It’s trying to unite the boys and everybody in the country. For five or six years we’ve been

over abroad and now we've come back to Liberia and apart from that education is as well going on nice, we understand that. So the only thing is we should try to organise the education, the education system is not strong in this country."

Music

2nd part : dialogue

Alphonse :

But tell me Philomène, in the report, Victor talks about raising the standard of education so that young people can hope for a better future and the country can be rebuilt. But it's also important to stop the war from starting again, isn't it?

Philomène :

Yes, that's true and that's why there are some institutes for getting rid of the resentment that the different parties in the conflict might have.

Alphonse :

So that they can make peace, you mean?

Philomène :

Yes, but not only by putting down their weapons but also in their hearts.

Alphonse :

And how does that work?

Philomène :

Well, often something called a “truth and reconciliation commission” is set up in a country that has experienced dictatorship or civil war. The aim is to attain national reconciliation.

Alphonse :

Like in South Africa?

Philomène

Exactly! But also in Liberia, Sierra Leone and in former South American dictatorships... There are over 25 such commissions in the world.

Alphonse

Do people get sentenced by the commission ?

Philomène :

Not really: Perpetrators of crimes have to admit what they did and repent before the victims or their families. Whereas the victims are invited to express themselves in a forum so that they can regain their dignity.

Outro

Reporter :

You've just heard the last Learning by Ear program on the subject of civil society and political commitment as we talked about reconciliation efforts in societies that come out of war. To listen to the program again or the other programs of this series, go to www.dw-world.de/lbe. There you can also comment on the program. Thanks for being with us and join us again for another Learning by Ear program!

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