The many faces of peace

Peacebuilding Training
The Hague, 1-5 December 2014

Participant Profiles
In this booklet are the profiles of the dynamic individuals that took part in the Diaspora Academy project inaugural Peacebuilding training workshop in December 2014.
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Others who have also contributed to this report are Ciaran Hickey, and Kalina Simeonova. Naturally this booklet is only possible because of the ten dynamic individuals who took time off their busy schedule to take part in this inaugural training workshop. To all the 2014 Peacebuilding training workshop participants we say a hearty “Thank You” for your valuable interactions and contributions to the 2014 training. In alphabetical order these individuals are: Abdihakim Yusuf, Ben Mussanze wa Mussangu, Freddy Karekezi, Mary Nyibol Kuek, Miri Koang, Mohammed M. Seid, Rebecca Andrew Kong, Sorie Obai Kamara, Stephanie Mbanzendorf and Tafesse Leta.

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Societies emerging out of conflict situations are faced with the challenge of building sustainable peace. Post-conflict peace building responsibility has been shared by actors in the contested terrain of the global and local community. In recent years, there is gradual growth toward recognizing the diaspora as a positive partner in peace building initiatives.

This booklet contains the stories of ten African peace builders. Their efforts range from building a peace centre in their countries of origin to negotiating talks between local authorities and the national government.

As they share their own revelations on peace, their own stories of challenges as well as their humble accomplishments, I hope you find inspiration in the many faces of peace. Their success comes from their understanding of agency.

Everyone has a part to play. Everyone has a stone to throw in the water. And this will creates a ripple effect. A ripple effect for peace.

HAPPY READING!

Hawi Tilahun
Introduction and ADPC in Brief

In May 2014 the African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) in cooperation with The Hague Academy for Local Governance (THA) and The Network University (TNU) launched a Diaspora Academy (DA). The overall objective of the DA is to upgrade and strengthen professional skills and competences of diaspora organizations in Europe engaged in improving the social and economic conditions and communal harmony in their countries of origin. Within the project capacity building for diaspora organizations focuses on three thematic area: Peacebuilding, Advocacy & Lobbying and Smart Partnerships/Networking. The project will run until April 2017.

In December 2014, ADPC held the inaugural Diaspora Academy Peacebuilding training to equip diaspora with critical peacebuilding/conflict resolution knowledge and skills. During the life of the project, the DA will train 30 dynamic diaspora individuals/organisations to acquire sufficient knowledge, skills about competencies with which to enable diaspora peace activists/brokers to strategically and meaningfully engage in peace-building activities in their countries of origin.

ADPC in Brief

The ADPC is a leading Diaspora think tank dedicated to mobilizing African Diaspora in Europe for the development of Africa. We conduct evidence-based, policy-related research based on diaspora perspectives, mind-set, experiences and expertise. The knowledge and information we generate is primarily targeted at three groups: diaspora organizations in Europe, development practitioners and policymakers dealing with diaspora related issues, both in Africa and in Europe. We also promote research collaboration between diaspora and homeland researchers in Africa and their affiliated institutions in the production of knowledge in this emerging research and policy field. We offer high-quality capacity building training to the emerging Diaspora ministries and other institutions in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries that are tasked with overseeing diaspora and development related matters.

A instrumental part of what we do is to facilitate network building and linkages in and among Diaspora organizations and other stakeholders active in the field of migration and development both in the host and home countries. We do this by organizing expert meetings, conferences and workshops in which diaspora development practitioners make contact, establish viable networks, learn from each other’s development-related activities, exchange valuable information, and share best practices and positive experiences in the field of diaspora and development. ADPC also actively lobbies for the access and incorporation of diaspora development practitioners in networks of established development cooperation circles, both in host and home countries.
My peacebuilding experience is as the founder of a peacebuilding organization: The Burundian Women for Peace and Development (BWPD). I am also the Chairperson of the MWPN (Multicultural Women Peace Network).

Through these organisations, we fight for Peace and reconciliation in our respective countries of origin. We provide training to grassroots organisations on: conflicts resolution, political participation, gender based violence and many other issues. To date these trainings are being provided in the Netherlands, Burundi, Rwanda and Congo.

The lessons I have learned from my experiences to date is that in order to work towards peace, one needs to have a long-term vision. Often the results of peacebuilding efforts are only visible after many years of effort.

To work for peace, one has to be humble and patient. I am fascinated about working for peace and I give my life to that work. After seeing the positive results of my work, I am even more committed.

Peace have many faces. That is what is amazing in trainings that bring together peace builders
My involvement in peace-building dates back to 2002 when the murder of a man sparked violent conflict between two Somali clans in my region. After the formal system failed several times to bring the conflict to an end, I approached elders for discussion about possible ways of resolving the conflict. I learned from them potential tools of traditional dispute resolution that enabled me, with the help of elders, to initiate peace talks between the clans and finally bring the conflict to an end. I learned that the main reason for the success was the legitimacy of the customary dispute resolution mechanisms and its pioneers in the eyes of the local people.

I believe that this success story was the turning point in my peacebuilding career and subsequently participated, directly or indirectly, almost all major peace-talks. For instance, in 2004 I initiated elder brokered peace-talks between the Ethiopian Government and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). From 2012 onwards, in collaboration with Conciliation Resources and community members I played an active role in an ongoing peace-talks between the various parties. In this vein, we organized a number of consultative discussions with the regional Diaspora in the UK who contributed meaningful insights to the peace discussions.

Further, the success of my first peacebuilding encounter reshaped my academic career and I made a shift from law to peace studies after which I extensively studied peacebuilding. To date I have authored and published various scholarly works on the subject.
I am the CEO and Founder of 2nd Chance a non-profit organisation helping young people in South Sudan and the United Kingdom. In December 2013, 2nd Chance hosted a fundraising event for the South Sudan crisis (war between the former vice president and president of South Sudan) at Abbey Centre, Kilburn, London. 2nd Chance managed to bring about 80 people together and form discussions of how to unite the former vice president and president of South Sudan—2nd Chance also managed to raise about £2000 to send to South Sudan as a response to the hundreds of thousands of people in urgent need of help across South Sudan. The Ambassador of South Sudan to the United Kingdom was at the fundraising event and 2nd Chance presented their peace building ideas to him.

My vision for the near future is to conduct workshops and training to encourage youth and children alike in the two places I call home, South Sudan and London.

I Know I will face challenges financially, as well as with working with youth in conflict, and bringing youth from different ethnicity together—I aim to build peace between ethnic groups. Another future plan of the 2nd Chance team is to expand our premises so we are able to work with more youth here in the UK.
There is no peace building without story of injustice. Conflict serves as the ingredient for peace building.

Peacebuilding, for me, began when I was very young. My earlier memory was reconciling my parents when I was five years old. I have a background in Radiology & Peace Studies. I was moved to enter the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding after witnessing ethnic clashes that threatened my ethnic group in the DRC. Along with my wife, I worked in the renowned Nyankunde/Bunia-based church hospital (in the Ituri District/DRC) called Centre Mendical Evangelique (CME). After experiencing the ethnic conflicts in 1993, with the support of my wife Kongosi and other activists, I co-founded the Centre Resolution Conflicts (CRC). The aim of the centre is to prevent others from becoming engaged in conflict in the DRC and worldwide.

In 1996, only after the CRC had been in operation for 3 years, the Congo/ Zaire war known also as the “First African World War” started, leaving 6 million dead and several millions orphaned. This is when my wife and I adopted 3 orphans whose parents were killed, resulting in us becoming a family comprised of 7 children.

Due to the threats posed to our lives by militias, my family and I were re-settled in Bradford/UK in 2002. Today, CRC has 2 branches: one in Beni/N’Kivu/DRC and another in Bradford/UK. Motivated by what we experienced in the DRC, my family is involved in peacebuilding and conflict resolution worldwide.

As part of being a peace and human rights activist, peace musician (or Mussanzi Family Choir), I produce and host for the CRC a monthly radio-show ‘Peace Music’ with online listeners worldwide.
I have pursued peace through my educational pursuits.

I have studied theology, philosophy and psychology in Cairo, Egypt. In addition I have attended a training course as a “Creators of Peace” at Initiatives of Change in The Hague.

Going through this Peacebuilding course has reminded me that attaining internal peace is the first step towards building peace in my society. I was also reminded that forgiving past grievances is an instrumental part of being able to move forward.

Another important lesson I learned by taking part in the training, is saying “no” in the right contexts. Knowing one’s capacity and limitations is equally crucial in the peacebuilding process.

Going forward, I hope to use what I learned in this training to build peace in my country South Sudan.

“Without peace we cannot build a nation”.

“Without peace there is no stability”.

“Without peace, there is no development”.

Mary Nyibol Kuek
South Sudan/The Netherlands
I have been involved in public activism since my days as a member of the Oromo student union as a student at Addis Ababa University in the early 2000s.

The areas of activities I am involved in relate to public awareness campaigns and organising demonstrations against the government’s plan to relocate the capital city of Oromiya from Finfinee (Addis Ababa) to Adama, drawing the government’s attention to the need to address the socio-economic issues affecting the Oromo people, and pushing reforms to make the Oromia regional state government more autonomous and effective in discharging its responsibility and service delivery to the Oromo people. As a result of my past activist activities, I experienced the “heavy hand” of government security agents and was eventually forced to flee Ethiopia.

Since I came to Switzerland, I have been actively involved in community building/organization, focused once again on Oromo Diaspora activities. I have been a member of the executive committee within the Oromo community in Switzerland since 2008 and I currently serve as its secretary. I am also a member of the Oromo Organizing committee in Europe. This committee organises public and private meetings, demonstrations, and joint community meetings in Europe. Our community organizing activities are very compatible with current peacebuilding approaches in action.

Given my years of involvement with public and community activism, peacebuilding competencies are an important skill to have in order to advance the desire for peace and stability among my people.
Abdihakim Yusuf
Ethiopia/United Kingdom

"Peace, without social justice, is no peace".

I am a Senior Adviser at Transparency Solutions which is a consulting firm that advises local, national and international governments and organisations on a variety of issues related to the Horn of Africa and the Somali Diaspora. My current area of interest is resource-based conflicts and federalism.

I have delivered key note speeches for various bodies and in September 2013, was invited by the Somali President's office to address the issue of resource sharing under a federal regime. In the Horn of Africa people are responding to insecurity in numerous creative ways but their actions often take place in relative isolation, with ad hoc innovation uninformed by good practice elsewhere and without academic research support or wider recognition.

I have observed that our actions have great potential for scaling up, through application to the same issue more widely, as well as to other diverse multidimensional issues. Integrating these actions into community-based voluntary nonviolent grassroots communities is vital to scaling up as it fundamentally increases the scope of ideas to circulate in viral, decentred, unplanned ways.

Knowledge brokering – in which innovative intermediaries facilitate two-way knowledge translation, fusion and co-production between the local community, practitioners and academia - could accelerate this scaling up and increase its impact. Consequently, as far as peace building is concerned, my future plans include promoting grassroots led initiatives.
I am a peacebuilding person by nature.

The problems that my country faces allows me to think deeply about peace or the resolution of the actual conflict through renewed dialogue among the diaspora.

My key focus is on identifying the policy dynamics necessary to avoid a country sliding back into war during or after post-conflict reconstruction.

As such, I believe that the key to change is education.

"Education and women’s empowerment is key to my pursuit of peace."
To capture my peace building experience, I would like to share a personal story.

I encountered conflict while shipping medical equipment to one of Malawi’s newly established clinics. On my arrival, Malawian government officials noticed that some of the equipment we brought had expired.

Angered that their country was being treated as a “dumping ground,” the Malawian government instructed me to take all the equipment back to where I came from. I had to quickly think through how best to mediate this conflict.

Based on the immediate need the local clinic had for the unexpired equipment, I managed to convince the government representatives to keep all the good material and discard the expired ones. In the days to followed, the government as well as the doctors from the clinic showed appreciation for my mediation work. The clinic is now fully serving the community.

This experience taught me that peacebuilding is an everyday pursuit.

"Building peace is like throwing a stone in the water. If everyone does his or her own share, it creates a ripple effect for peace."
I have peacebuilding experience from during the civil war in Sierra Leone from 1991-2002 working with various communities regarding sensitization efforts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Special court system through meetings, public lectures and musical performances. From 1999-2001, I worked with Sierra Leonean refugees in refugee camps in Guinea.

My peacebuilding efforts also extended to period when there was land or border dispute between Sierra Leone and neighbouring Guinea (Yenga) from 2008-2011. During this time, I was involved in conferences, musical concerts, conducting tours along the Eastern province of Sierra Leone where this land is situated, and produced a song entitled “Save Yenga” that was played over the BBC and VOA. Further, during the democratic transitions or electoral processes in Sierra Leone from 2002-2007, in a bid to consolidate the hard won peace in Sierra Leone, I and my team tailored a concept called “Guitar Better Than Gun” which was sponsored and supported by the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development and the Shain Foundation Netherlands in 2007/2008.

In 2010, my team and I went further to establish the Peace Initiative Coalition (PIC) to advocate against student campism and youth gangism. During this period various schools engaged in consultative meetings in order to resolve their differences. The outbreak of youth gangism differentiated by race left a lot of youth dead and wounded across Sierra Leone. Through social mediation, we were able to bring these gangs together on a common platform and addressed various issues that brought about the conflict.

"Peace can never be achieved by force. It must be achieved through mutual understanding."