

# Training Report



## *Diaspora-oriented Peace Building*

The Hague, 1- 5 December, 2014

## Acknowledgements

This Report was written by Hawi Tilahun, who in 2014 was the Project Associate for the African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) Diaspora Academy. Under the leadership of Awil Mohamoud, ADPC's Director, Hawi and several others were instrumental in making the training a reality. As such, the training workshop was a result of the efforts of several individuals. Special acknowledgement goes in particular to the lead trainer Jasmine Nordien. ADPC would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Prof. Gerd Junne, Willemijn Lambert and Fatumo Farah in their capacity as resource persons. But above all, this training session would not have been possible without the valuable participation of each of the participants who took part in this inaugural workshop. We commend your dedication and commitment to promoting peace.

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## **Background and Introduction**

In May 2014, the African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) in cooperation with The Hague Academy of Local Governance (THA) and The Network University (TNU) launched a Diaspora Academy (DA). The overall objective of the Academy is to upgrade and strengthen the professional skills and competences of diaspora organizations in Europe engaged in improving social and economic conditions and communal harmony in their countries of origin.

The duration of the Diaspora Academy is from May 2014 to April 2017. In addition to carrying out evidence based research and outreach interventions, through the Academy, various diaspora organisations across Europe will gain training in three key areas namely: i) Peace building; ii) Advocacy and Lobbying and; iii) establishing Smart Partnerships.

In December 2014, the Academy held its first diaspora-oriented training workshop on Peace Building. The training was conducted by The Network University and held at The Hague Academy for Local Governance, during 1-5 December, 2014. Ten African diaspora peace activists representing leading diaspora organisations from Belgium, Finland, Switzerland, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom took part in the training. The 10 participants who took part in this important session originated from Burundi, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and South Sudan. During the course of 2015 and 2016, two more peace building trainings will be offered. Each of these training workshops will consist of 10 diaspora peace activists representing leading diaspora organizations in Europe who are active in promoting peace in their respective countries of origin.

Target beneficiaries of the Diaspora Academy's peace building trainings are African diaspora organizations, organized professional associations, groups and individuals in Europe active or interested in areas of peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction in their countries of origin. Particular preference is given to diaspora peace activists who originate from countries located in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions as well as Liberia and Sierra Leone.

### **Why this Training ?**

The training sets out to strengthen the peace-building capacity of diaspora peace activists/brokers. It provides activists/brokers with competencies and skills they can utilise in peace-building activities in their countries of origin. By increasing peace building capacities of diaspora peace activists, the expectation is that their efforts towards peace and social stability in their countries of origin will become more effective and enduring. Acquiring adequate conflict transformation techniques, skills and practical tools will enable diaspora peace activists and their counterparts in their home countries to operate more efficiently in peace building interventions. It will also help to increase the number of peace-building actors in respective homelands by incorporating diaspora in the process in a more structured and formal manner.



### **Diaspora-oriented Peace building Training Participants, December 2014**

The 10 peace activists represent leading diaspora organisations from Belgium, Finland, Switzerland, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom and originate from Burundi, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and South Sudan.

This was a dynamic interactive group who engaged in the training in a diverse manner as can be seen in this video link: <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=1535683150015426&set=vb.1425310664386009&type=2&theatre>

## **Training Objectives and Approach**

As discussed above, the training programme sets out to strengthen the peace building capacity of diaspora peace activists/brokers. In line with this, the overall objectives of the training are to provide participants with:

- *an awareness of the potential strategic role of the diaspora as peace promoters in the diaspora and countries of origin;*
- *a space for critical reflection on the concepts of peace and peace building;*
- *a better understanding of peace building dynamics and insight into concepts and various approaches to conflict transformation tailored to their specific peace building needs;*
- *knowledge of practical tools to contribute to the process of conflict transformation, that can enhance the capacity of diaspora peace activists to operate more efficiently in their peace building endeavours;*
- *an introduction to potentially strategic partners and networks necessary for an effective peace building operation and;*
- *examples and lessons learnt from experiences of peace building endeavours that diaspora organisations, groups and individuals initiated to transform conflicts in their countries of origin.*

## **Training Approach**

Elicitive participatory methodology was used during the course of the training. The methodology is highly participatory and assumes all participants are resource persons who bring their knowledge, experience, and skills to bear in the training and group learning process. The focus is on collaboration and learning together while developing and sharpening idea(s) into concrete plans by tapping into the groups' collective wisdom and experience.

To further illustrate this particular methodology, the first day of the training consisted of participants carrying out a "hands and feet" exercise. This exercise allowed participants to reflect upon what they bringing to the training as well as what they would like to take away. This exercise allowed participants to see themselves not only as receivers, but also as direct contributors to the group's learning experience. Specific training methods used were case studies, storytelling, participant presentations of their Back Home Action Plan (BHAP), presentations, lectures and short inputs as well as individual reflections.

*More information on the Elicitive training approach is available at: <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/prescriptive->*

## **Training Content**

Several key topics and issues related to peace building and the role of the diaspora were addressed during each day of the training. The presentation on the diaspora using soft power as a tool to build peace set the tone for the week. Concepts of justice and peace were discussed, further extending to discussions of just peace, sustainable peace, and victors peace. As some of the participants work in the areas of justice and economic development, these concepts resonated with their areas of expertise.

Other equally important topics covered related to conflict, violence and peace. This lead to grappling with key peace building concepts, frameworks and interventions. The word *conflict* was translated into the different native languages of the participants to further evaluate its diverse meanings and its potential for positive transformation in different cultures. Issues pertaining to regional and transnational conflicts, shadow war economy, and human security were discussed vigorously.

These topics were addressed in light of discussions on conflict and stakeholder analysis. Economic development and peace building, the role of diaspora and the value of relationships were also addressed. The topics of development and conflict allowed participants to reflect upon issues of horizontal inequality as well as uneven development. Further key topics covered in the training were presentations and discussions on education and community empowerment, envisioning peace and the Back Home Action Plan.



## Key Insights

*“The participation in a peace process is not about the mathematics of numbers and percentages in relation to who is in majority or minority. It is about plurality, diversity, participation and ownership of all affected by the conflict.”<sup>1</sup>*

**Local Participation:** One of the key insights that came out of the training was the critical need to engage local actors and their own endogenous wisdom in peace building work. The project of peace building must begin with first addressing the question of what *kind* of peace local communities desire to achieve and based on such demands, evaluate how the diaspora could further serve as a positive partner to attain that vision. International-local peace building engagement with a common goal and understanding puts local people, those that are the direct subject of conflict, at the center of writing a new narrative. Giving local communities ownership and a voice in the participatory process further solidifies common identity. The participants also gained a deeper understanding that such an inclusionary processes have potential to build sustainable horizontal trust among communities affected by conflict.

**Finding Inner Peace:** The participants gained greater insight into the nature of conflict which manifests itself on an individual as well as on a societal level. Conflict at the individual level can be categorized as intra-personal and inter-personal. At the societal level, it manifests itself at the levels of intra-group and inter-group. One of the insights gained during the discussion was that individuals that are unable to transform their inner conflict toward positive gain could also produce a society in which conflict is not transformed for the greater good. Thus, as peace builders, participants evaluated the critical need to first build peace within themselves. Finding inner peace, whether it is through religion, culture, or education remains an essential and ongoing task for a peace builder. The story sharing exercise also gave participants insight into how to secure such inner peace. As participants practiced story sharing within their small groups, they identified this kind of activity as a key component to releasing their burdens and further securing greater solidarity with others.

**Conflict and Stakeholder Analysis:** The participants also gained deeper insight into the critical necessity of undertaking conflict and stakeholder analysis. The facilitator, Jasmin Nordien, gave a simple yet powerful illustration that further demonstrated the importance of analysis before pursuing peace building work. She indicated that when one visits his or her doctor, it is important that a proper diagnosis is done before the doctor prescribes needed medication. In the same way, peace building work starts with similar in-depth assessment before planning and implementation. By the end of the training, participants had a broader understanding of the internal, external and international root causes of conflicts in Africa. In peace building initiatives, issues of Africa’s debt burden, unequal trade relations and conditions with industrialized countries, and its incorporation into the global economy are not considered as factors contributing to conflict.<sup>2</sup> There is also the case of the



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<sup>1</sup>Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, “Feast with your enemies,”.

regionalization of conflict, as conflict faced by one country affects and/or is the product of another country's conflict. One participant, Abdihakim Yusuf, insightfully indicated, *"We need to recognize how we are benefiting from other country's chaos as well."* Participants gained greater insight into the inter-linkages between the global and local systems at play in bringing about conflict. They also came to the realization that these stakeholders could serve as key assets to peace building engagement.

**Soft Power:** The use of soft power for peace building was a key insight discussed by participants. In this context *power* is defined as 'the ability to exert influence'. Soft power, is therefore an alternative option to peace building, specifically focusing on the power of the diaspora to attract through persuasion, rather than force or coercion. The use of strategic soft power tools, such as the media and print media, are critical to note in conflict transformation. Stephanie Mbanzendore, one of the participant's and an expert presenter, shared her peace building experience in the context of Burundi. She emphasized the role of the media in featuring her positive work and spreading the message of peace beyond her sphere of influence. For her, media played a critical role in challenging the culture of conflict and directing people's political will towards building peace.

## Peace Building Challenges and Constraints

During the course of the training, a number of challenges experienced during peace building processes were highlighted. Each of these, classified in the context of the country of origin or host country, are discussed in more detail below.

### Challenges in countries of origin

**Distrust:** One of the challenges facing the diaspora community is the local community's distrust of their activities in their countries of origin. African diasporas, as the product of "the west" as one participant explained, might be rejected by the locals because they are no longer viewed as part of the home community. As many of the participants indicated, local people sometimes see the diaspora as the other enemy. Such negative perception of diaspora creates resistance to their peace building work. The challenge therefore remains how to build a bridge between the diaspora community and the local community that cultivates a level of trust for collaborative peace building. This challenge is also aggravated by the lack of appropriate infrastructure and partners on the ground mediating between local needs and diaspora activities.

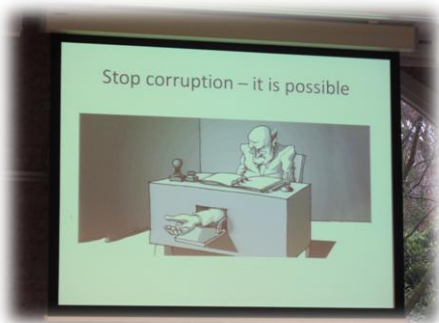
**The State:** Another challenge identified was the state's inability to meet human security requirements and protect human rights due to the weakness of state structures and lack of resources. This led further to discussion regarding the importance of state-building for sustainable peace building endeavours. There is also the challenge of working within a state system that is unwilling to meet the needs of its people due to a division of power that favours some and marginalizes others. Societies in which this is the case remain at the "latent" conflict stage until a trigger event brings about external manifestation of the conflict

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<sup>2</sup> Yash Tandon, *Root Causes of Peacelessness and Approaches to Peace in Africa* (13), 1999. Print.



sometimes through violence. This was particularly evident in the discussion of the conflict situation in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is not currently categorized as a post conflict society, but the country's politically hostile environment hinders true peace building. Participants further struggled with the question of how to work to dismantle such structures to further engage in building positive peace for the civil society. In light of this challenge, one of the insights gained was that: ***“Structure is created by people. Therefore, structure can be dismantled by people.”*** In light of these challenges, African diasporas must consider their peace building work as part of the structural transformation of societal systems.



**Corruption and accountability:** The challenges of corruption and the lack of accountability that exists in their home countries were also repeatedly discussed by the participants. This discussion was also framed in light of systematic and structural forms of corruption. In places where a culture of impunity is prevalent, reversing such a culture and establishing a system that upholds the rule of law becomes a key challenge.

Such restructuring is needed in order to produce sustainable peace and break any cycle of conflict. The topic of accountability also expanded to discussion on mainstream peace building institutions and ideologists such as the IMF<sup>3</sup>, WTO<sup>4</sup> and OECD<sup>5</sup>, as well as NGOs that might contribute to war making or sustaining conflict within Africa. The challenge for the diaspora then remains finding strategic ways to encourage grassroots movements that challenge corruption, support the building of the rule of law in their home countries and utilize resources abroad to lobby against policies of international organizations detrimental to sustainable peace in Africa.

**Uneven development:** African diaspora play a role in creating uneven development in their home countries, and this has the potential to bring about conflict. Where remittances and development projects are targeted toward a Diaspora's particular home community, this could potentially create uneven development within a specific region. One of the expert presenters, Fatumo Farah, shared this experience with regards to the insecurity facing the city of Mogadishu, as diaspora communities often concentrate investment in their own places of birth. Such practices also result in competition among different diaspora communities as they try to make their city or village better than others. This could lead to animosity among community members in the home country that are directly affected by the uneven distribution of development. Based on these challenges, one of the expert presenters, Professor Dr. Gerd Junne provided insight into the positive and negative nature

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<sup>3</sup> International Monetary Fund

<sup>4</sup> World Trade Organization

<sup>5</sup> Non-governmental organizations

of such competition. For example, building hospitals might pose less of a threat than building a school, as the latter might also deal with issues on the content of what is being taught in the classroom.

### Challenges in countries of residence

**Lack of knowledge and 'know how':** African diasporas face many constraints in their host countries that hinder their peace building initiatives. One of the challenges facing the diaspora is the general lack of knowledge and resources for peace building work. Despite the desire to effect real change in their home countries, many diaspora simply do not know where to start or how to navigate their long-distance engagement with their home countries. As one of the participants, Mary Kuek indicated, ***"I want peace. I just do not know where to begin."*** Even with concrete ideas, the participants indicated the challenges of searching for appropriate funds and securing mental and material capital to implement their visions. The participants further discussed the need for greater capacity building and networking opportunities. The challenges of living as diaspora loom large, as they are trying to meet their own needs and the needs of their family members while also securing the demands of dependent family members in their countries of origin. The socio-economic barriers African diaspora communities face also greatly impede their vision for peace building in their respective home countries.

**Internal conflict in the diaspora:** The second challenge that was vigorously discussed by participants is the internal conflict among African diaspora communities. Often, conflict among the diaspora is a reflection of conflict in their respective home countries. Mary further explained, ***"Since the current South Sudanese crisis started, my best friend who is not from my own ethnic group does not talk to me anymore."*** Conflict on the ground leads to diaspora communities being polarized, further undermining their own capacity to work together and bring positive change in their countries of origin. This particular challenge led many of participants to first apply their Back Home action plans to solidify trust, cultivate understanding and secure a common identity among their diaspora communities abroad. In order to show the positive contribution African diaspora communities can make in securing peace, one of the expert presenters, Fatumo Farah, shared a message of hope regarding a 1998 tribal conflict in Somalia. When the diaspora community from these tribes came together to discuss the issue, she explained that the fighting ceased on the ground. This story of hope helped the participants understand that they are major stakeholders in the peace building process of their countries of origin.

## Inspiring Peace Building Stories

### ***Peace has many faces*** -Stephanie Mbanzendore

When asked why he became a peace builder, Ben Mussanzi wa Mussangu replied, “Peace building, for me, began when I was young. My earliest memory was reconciling my parents when I was five years old...” This story brought others to the realization that peace building first begins within one’s intimate circle, further expanding to the larger spheres of influence. With the support of his wife Kongosi and other peace activists, Ben founded Centre Resolution Conflicts (CRC) which now has its branches in the DR Congo as well Bradford/UK. As part of peace and human rights activists, peace musicians (or Mussanzi Family Choir), Ben produces for CRC and hosts a monthly radio-show ‘Peace Music’ with a worldwide online audience of listeners. *“We are all products of conflict,”* Ben said with humour that held a measure of truth. For him, every peace builder must evaluate how he or she could transform that conflict into peace in their communities.

Freddy Karekezi shared a particular conflict he encountered while shipping medical equipments to one of Malawi’s newly established clinics. On his arrival, the Malawian government officials noticed that some of the equipment he brought had expired. Angered that their country is being treated as a “dumping ground,” the Malawian government instructed Freddy to take all the equipment back to where he came from. Freddy explained, “I had to instantly think how to best mediate this conflict...” Based on the immediate need of the local clinic for the unexpired equipment, Freddy managed to convince the government representatives to keep all the good material and discard the expired ones. In the days to follow, the government as well as the doctors from the clinic showed appreciation for Freddy’s mediation work. The clinic is now fully serving the community.

Miri Koang is a young CEO and Founder of 2nd Chance, a non-profit organization helping young people in South Sudan as well as United Kingdom. Throughout the training, this dynamic young woman continued to reiterate, ***“my passion lies in serving the youth because they are the future.”*** In December 2013, 2nd change brought eighty people together to inform discussions on how to unite the former vice president and president of South Sudan during the recent crisis. Further articulating her vision for the near future, Miri hopes to conduct workshops and trainings to encourage youth and children alike in the two places she calls home, South Sudan and London. Her astute awareness of the need to engage the young population both in her home and host country was a source of great inspiration for fellow participants.

When asked about his peace building story, Mohammed M. Seid thought to write his story.

*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. As the formal legal system failed several times to bring the conflict to an end, I approached the elders for discussion about possible ways to resolve the conflict. I learned from them potential tools of traditional dispute resolution that enabled me, with the help of the elders, to initiate peace talks between the clans. The conflict was brought to an end. I learned that the main reason for the success was the legitimacy of the customary dispute resolution and its pioneers in the eyes of the local people.*

## Best Practices and Key Lessons

*"A short answer to the problem of violence is that we need to work at various levels; at the individual level with education as the key element; at group level where a culture of tolerance and mutual respect need to be consciously inculcated; but above all, at a national level where durable and credible institutions which balance the rights and responsibilities of groups (however defined) need to be put in place".<sup>6</sup>*

A number of best practices and lessons learned were shared during the training. These experiences, as detailed below, provide insight into what has been done and what works.

**Peace building through education:** Considering Africa's growing youth population and the lack of employment opportunities, participants highlighted the crucial need to target youth for peace building in their countries of origin. As one of the participants, Rebecca Kong, explained, **"peace education is key"**. Therefore, the key lesson is to strategically include youth both in the host country as well as the home country in peace building and development initiatives. Fatumo shared her foundation's work which links sport to peace and development. As there is a need for youth to be brought together to see their commonality, she used football as the common ground to further peace education. Another key lesson that came out of the training was the necessity to begin peace building work based on one's own sphere of influence. This sphere consists of the space one has control over and begins with an evaluation of one's sphere of concern. Stephanie's presentation best captured this idea as she advised the other participants to begin their peace building initiatives first where they are. This lesson was influential as the participants critically evaluated their spheres of concern and influence to further craft their Back Home action plans.

**Holistic Community Development:** As discussed in the challenges section, diaspora engagement in their countries of origin has the potential to create systemic forms of inequality. Professor Dr. Gerd Junne characterized the dangers of horizontal inequality as eroding unity and trust among communities. To avoid such risk, he proposed the idea of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 16.

focusing on *holistic community development*. This type of development also needs inclusive institutions mitigating such activity between the host and home countries. One of the participants, Mohammed Seid, offered the idea that this type of development scheme could be carried out through Asset-Based Community Development. Participants expressed their need to learn how to do further assessment of community needs and further target their peace building goals towards holistic human and community development.

**Diaspora Partnership:** Regarding the question of diaspora cooperation with local, grassroots movements, Professor Junne also emphasized the strategic role diasporas can play in encouraging the changing of norms in their countries of origin. This could be accomplished through supporting grassroots mobilization for change. As he gave the example of a sign he saw displayed at Kenya University which stated, “**No Corruption Zone,**” he challenged participants to strategically consider how to encourage such grassroots mobilization against changing of norms. Furthermore, examples such as this show that peace building work does not always begin with partnerships with the national government. This highlighted the importance of diasporas partnering with local governments, authorities and other civil society organizations in order to facilitate peace building. On a larger scale, diaspora also need to seek partnership among regional and international organizations dealing with their own particular area of interest. Through the session participants gained a greater understanding of the need to locate partnerships at all levels of society in order to implement peace building initiatives.

#### **A positive training approach**

*The small group experience allowed me to share the burden of Mr. Leta. In his case, it's a minority ruling over a majority. The same thing in Burundi. I can feel the injustice and inequality that was burning inside of him. We shared the same burden. I am glad I could share my story and help others grow. I give my life to that work.*

## **Conclusion and Follow up Action**

### **Overall impact**

Overall, the training had tremendous impact on the participants. They expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to establish friendships and potential partnerships with others who share the same vision of peace. For some like Stephanie, it helped her evaluate where she is and how to best move forward. Further echoing the impact of the training, Stephanie expressed the small group experience as one that was deeply insightful for her.

The participants joyfully expressed that through the training they gained much needed insights and knowledge on about peace building. It also brought to the table new ideas and knowledge on peace and conflict transformation. The wealth of experiences served as a source of inspiration, as participants learned how others dealt with similar problems in different contexts. The training also allowed for greater networking opportunities and created the much needed bridge to connect peace activists. Listening to the participants' knowledge and experiences left one of the participants with these sentiments, “**If they could do it. I can do it**”. Others characterized the impact of the training as a catalyst that revived their passion for peace building: “**[the training] moved my stagnant water,**” expressed Abdihakim Yusuf. The participants expressed that they felt equipped with the relevant materials to develop a clear objective and vision through critical assessment of the conflict

and stakeholder analysis. Sorie Kamara best captured the overall impact of the weeks training with the following statement, ***“The training has equipped me to be an instrument for the benefit of others”***. The participants left with more knowledge, resources and peace building skills, a wider circle of friendship and a lasting support team, as well as revived passion to undertake peace building work in their host and home countries.

## Follow-Up Action

One of the objectives of the workshop was to provide a platform in which diaspora peace activists can come together, establish viable contacts, learn from each other’s peace-building work, exchange valuable information, and share best practices and positive experiences in the field. After the training workshop ended, the participants requested ADPC to set up a programme which will help to strengthen the networks and strategic partnerships among the African diaspora peace-builders in Europe and their counterparts in their respective countries in Africa.

Participants also asked to be put into contact with future peace building training participants; ie., those to take part in the June 2015 and June 2016 trainings. The participants are currently taking the initiative to remain in contact with one another via different media outlets to exchange vital skills, knowledge, support and resources fit for peace building endeavours. Further follow-up will be taken by ADPC regarding participants’ implementation of their Back Home Action Plan.



## **Annex I: List of Diaspora participants in the first training workshop of the Diaspora Academy**

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