

Diaspora Building Peace

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A research paper by



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1. Executive summary

The African diaspora has an important role to play in contributing to peace in Africa. This paper reflects on the African diaspora's strategic role and engagement in peacebuilding initiatives in their respective countries of origin and countries of residence.

The information is primarily derived from field research (Diaspora Academy Programme¹) as well as literature on diasporas and conflict and peace.

The paper discusses:

- Diaspora and peacebuilding
- The soft power of diaspora
- Peacebuilding roles and skills
- How to promote diaspora engagement in peacebuilding
- Policy relevance and recommendations

The section on *diaspora and peacebuilding* provides background on peacebuilding, briefly introduces the diaspora's role in peacebuilding, and defines key concepts used in the paper.

The section on the *soft power of diaspora* explores how diaspora peacebuilders use soft power in peacebuilding through concrete examples; and closes with 'insights and cautions' gleaned from the experience of African diaspora peacebuilders.

The section on *peacebuilding roles and skills* presents the many roles assumed by diaspora when doing peacebuilding through inspiring vignettes shared during the Diaspora Academy, thus highlighting best practices from the field. The peacebuilding roles are: bridge-building, transmission of values, lobbying and advocacy, networking and partnership, dialogue and awareness, experts and advisors, and social development and economic investment.

The section on *policy relevance and recommendations* reflects on the home and host country's responsibilities to its diaspora, the diaspora's responsibility to realise its peacebuilding potential, and discusses ways of engaging the diaspora to promote peace in their countries of origin.

Lastly, the *conclusion* summarises the main issues and findings discussed in the paper.

¹ For more information on the Diaspora Academy see <http://www.diaspora-centre.org/diaspora-academy-2/>.

2. Introduction

The African diaspora has an important role to play in contributing to peace in Africa. This paper reflects on the strategic role the African diaspora plays in peacebuilding processes in their countries of origin, the diaspora's engagement in peacebuilding initiatives in their respective countries of origin and, specifically, explores how the diaspora strives to harness soft power for peace.

This paper documents the invaluable peacebuilding experiences, practices and insights shared by African diaspora peace activists, which could be useful to other diasporas and peacebuilders. The information is largely derived from literature and field research, namely, the Diaspora Academy Programme (DA), which took the form of four peacebuilding workshops², held in the period May 2014 to April 2017, attended by 40 diaspora peacebuilders.

The Diaspora Academy's objective is to upgrade and strengthen professional skills and competences of diaspora organisations in Europe engaged in improving the social and economic conditions and communal harmony in their countries of origin. The training aims to strengthen the peace-making capacity of diaspora peace activists/brokers and to support them in the application of gained skills in peacebuilding activities in their countries of origin. The participants who attended the workshops are primarily African diaspora peace activists and development practitioners currently living in Europe but originally from across Africa, namely, Burundi, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

² See workshop reports <http://www.diaspora-centre.org/publications/>

3. Diaspora and peacebuilding

Diaspora involvement in the conflict 'back home' can be both positive and negative because of the diversity within the diaspora. Diaspora individuals and organisations often have conflicting roles: some contribute to the conflict and prolong the conflict through the provision of financial, material and political support that is used for military purposes and decreases the parties' incentives to negotiate. Others contribute to peace and the resolution of conflict through the provision of financial, material and political support that can put pressure on parties to engage in negotiations to bring about a political solution.³

Until recently, the dominant discourse on diaspora engagement in peacebuilding primarily focused on the negative aspects of diaspora engagement in conflict and post-conflict contexts, namely, the coercive power of diaspora groups. Diasporas were viewed as fuelling conflict and exacerbating tensions; however, diasporas often contribute positively towards peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected countries. The challenge is how to inspire diasporas to direct their energy to the promotion of a sustainable peace.

Before continuing much further, and for purposes of clarity, a few key concepts used throughout the paper are defined, namely, diaspora and peacebuilding.

Who or what is the diaspora? Diasporas are transnational communities comprised of individuals who come together in a 'community' far from 'home'. They are bound together by a collective memory, a desire to return and a commitment to the country of origin. These individuals share a collective identity, group consciousness and solidarity.⁴ Through their commitment to the country of origin, members of diaspora engage transnationally in a number of ways, and activities engaged in can be both direct and indirect.⁵ Direct transnational engagements occur when diaspora individuals or groups send money, goods or ideas to their country of origin directly. Indirect transnational engagements occur when diaspora individuals or groups urge others, including European governmental and non-governmental actors, to undertake activities to sanction or benefit the country of origin.⁶

What is peacebuilding? Peacebuilding was initially used in situations where a peace agreement had been concluded, to prevent recurrence of violent conflict and to facilitate the consolidation of negative peace. Over time, it has been recognised that peacebuilding activities can also take place before and during violent conflict, and seek to create conditions for positive and sustainable peace by addressing structural causes of violent conflict in a comprehensive manner. Peacebuilding thus establishes sustainable peace by addressing root causes of conflict through reconciliation, institution building, political and economic transformation. It aims at strengthening negative peace and developing positive peace.

³ Smith and Stares (2007)

⁴ Horst (2006), pp.32–33.

⁵ Østergaard-Nielsen (2003), p.70.

⁶ See Annex 9.4: Diaspora, Strategic Peacebuilding Engagement

⁷ Smith and Stares (2007).

⁸ A simple definition of power is 'the ability to influence'.

⁹ Joseph Nye developed the concept of soft power further in his book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004), and improved on the definition in 2011.

4. The soft power of diaspora

The above definition of peacebuilding signals a wide range of possible roles and activities by diaspora that can contribute to peace in their country of origin. Diaspora have more comparative advantages and possess attributes that differentiate them from traditional NGOs and official aid agencies, because they are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural norms, relations and networks, and thus have “greater knowledge of and sensitivity to local customs and traditions in places of origin”⁷ Moreover, they often have a better understanding of a conflict situation.

The role of a peacebuilder is dynamic and fluid; it evolves and is shaped by the combination of a number of factors, including phase of the conflict, level of engagement, and whether the engagement is direct or indirect. Given the complexity and often limited ability to influence,⁸ the diaspora peacebuilder must be creative, and the strategic use of ‘soft power’ is the perfect ‘tool’ to help fulfil their role.

Soft power: Soft power is defined as “the ability to affect others through co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes.”⁹ Soft power, as opposed to coercive or hard power, rests on the ability to engage in dialogue and use persuasion to achieve desired outcomes.¹⁰ Dialogue and persuasion happen in the context of a relationship, therefore relationships and information are two key components of soft power. Other components are: levels of trust and credibility/legitimacy, communication skills, and the ability to collaborate with a range of diverse stakeholders and institutions (local, national, regional to global). Thus, the media and social media are influential tools in facilitating the transfer of soft power across space and time. Other sources of soft power are education, diplomacy, government, cultural heritage as well as business innovation and networks.

Stéphanie Mbanzndore: A Diaspora peacebuilder must be dexterous, informed, connected, passionate and courageous. No-one embodies this more than Stéphanie Mbanzndore, founder member of the organisation Burundian Women for Peace and Development (BWPD).¹¹ During the Diaspora Academy,¹² Stéphanie emphasised the value of soft power when sharing her experience as a diaspora peacebuilder actively engaged in peace work in the Netherlands and Burundi. Soft power as a strategy requires careful and clear consideration of people, issues and processes. It also involves taking decisions that allow the peace potential of a situation to manifest gracefully through nuance engagement in navigating a challenging reality. Stéphanie demonstrates the skilful use of soft power in planning a trip home.

In July 2004, she participated in a trip to Burundi aimed at introducing the Burundian diaspora to the new Burundian government, to build relations, and to assess the situation; this was her first visit home in nine years. There was a great deal of planning, strategising and preparation beforehand to make the trip a success.

One consideration was ‘who should go?’ Should it be a Burundian-only delegation or a diverse delegation. After much deliberation, it was decided to go with a diverse delegation of women, to reflect the Burundian women’s new circumstance and integration into the Netherlands, and to acknowledge BWPD’s work in the Netherlands with the Multicultural Women Peace Makers, which included women from diverse cultures. The Burundian women also wanted witnesses from outside of Burundi to be present; their presence would give more authority, legitimacy and credibility to the trip. A diverse group of women would also bring a higher level of visibility, access and

¹⁰ Nye (2004).

¹¹ Burundian Women for Peace and Development (BWPD) was established in 2001 with seven women. Stéphanie Mbanzndore is a founder member. www.bwpd.nl.

¹² Stéphanie participated in the Diaspora Academy as an expert.

credibility to the trip and ensure that everyone is on their 'best behaviour'.¹³ It would also make it possible for the Burundian women in the delegation not to be drawn into the quagmire of local politics and feuds; and to access and engage with a broader cross-section of Burundian society, which they would not necessarily have access to if they travelled as a Burundian-only delegation. Media coverage of the visit was also organised, and Stéphanie shared how they used the media to promote, garner support and create visibility for their work during the trip. The soft power strategy yielded results; their activities¹⁴ made headlines in the local media and elicited interviews and invitations from high places. The delegation was invited to the presidential palace by the First Lady. The media coverage of their work helped to profile their work and spread the message of peace to a wider audience across Burundi. The 2004 visit and the relationships established subsequently helped Stéphanie and BWPD to continue their peace work in Burundi after the visit. She also emphasised the importance of gaining the support of key decision makers, namely, the First Lady and the Minister for Gender.

After 2004, Stéphanie did lots of capacity-building¹⁵ trainings¹⁶ focussed on building peace in Burundi, and a campaign to educate girl children. A practical consideration (the high cost of hiring training venues) led to the idea of possibly building a training centre. In Stéphanie's own words "at first, I doubted it is possible, but when you don't ask, you don't get." On her return to the Netherlands, Stéphanie approached the Dutch government with the idea to build a centre, and received a positive response. She then asked counterparts in Burundi what their contribution would be to this project, and the local municipality gave the land for the building. The Multi-Purpose Centre of Kirundo was built; it has a large hall that seats 250, a library, training room, two offices, a computer room, and a large inside compound. The First Lady of Burundi officially opened the centre on 11 March 2011. The staff of the Centre has an orange uniform to acknowledge and thank the Netherlands for its contribution.

The next challenge was how to maintain the building and cover costs. In the face of a challenge, Stéphanie's rose to the occasion: "to sustain the centre is a problem, but you do just step by step." Once the centre was built, Stéphanie challenged the Burundian government to fund activities at the centre. She lobbied local government to take ownership of the centre and the library staff was placed on the government's payroll. The government paid the centre staff salaries for the first two years, and thereafter she approached the Ministry of Education for funding. "Lobbying is very important in the work I am doing! But off course we are always struggling with the funding." To generate additional income, parts of the centre are hired out and they are always looking for paying activities to generate income. The use of soft power is clearly an integral and essential part of Stéphanie's peace work.

From Hard to Soft Power: In the context of Liberia, research by Antwi-Boateng (2012) shows a shift in the US-based Liberian diaspora's use of power, from hard power to soft power. Antwi-Boateng¹⁷ found that the Liberian diaspora used hard power during the 14-year war in Liberia; however, in the post-conflict environment, the same diaspora employed soft power to achieve peace. They opted for soft power because the cost of hard power was simply too high, "the use of hard power had created a hurting-stalemate."¹⁸ The Liberian diaspora "exercised soft power influence in aid of peacebuilding by transforming some of its hard power assets, like financial advantage from coercive activities such as war into persuasive ventures aimed at promoting peace."¹⁹

Insights and Cautions: In their role as peacebuilders, African Diaspora peacebuilders shared

insights gained from their experience in the field:²⁰

Be aware that as the diaspora working in your country of origin:

- You hold an insider/outsider position that has advantages and disadvantages.
- You are in a position of power, and often represent 'success'; it does not matter what you are doing in your host country.
- You are a 'carrier of values' from another society.
- You can leave when conflict and violence erupt, but others have to stay behind. Your actions can have consequences for those left behind when you leave.
- You maybe resented because you are perceived as having 'run away' when the going got tough.

In your role as a diaspora peacebuilder:

- Be very clear about your purpose, your position, and the limitations inherent in your role.
- Focus your energy on your sphere of influence, or you will become overwhelmed and paralysed by the issues in your circle of concern.
- Caution: Do not raise unrealistic expectations about what you can do; it will only raise people's hopes.
- Know your role as peacebuilder is not neutral, and try to understand the implications of your peace work in a given context.
- Be aware that you are not entering an empty space. There are others doing work there; connect or collaborate with them.

Before starting a project or initiative, clarify your:

- Position and interests
- Perception and perspectives
- Expectations and assumptions with regard to your role as a peacebuilder (even though your intentions are good, you can create a mess)
- Power relations

¹³ There are guests in the house, so the Burundian 'family' must behave and be nice.

¹⁴ Activities included: a conference with decision makers, meetings with ministers, conducting conflict transformation workshops, and visiting organisations working in different regions.

¹⁵ Capacity building training on: conflict resolution, gender-based violence, domestic violence, leadership, self-esteem, elections and campaigning, HIV/AIDS and youth.

¹⁶ Stephanie: "At the end of every training, all participants received a new bicycle. They need means to travel. They are very happy with that. They say: we've got somebody who understands our concern."

¹⁷ Antwi-Boateng (2012).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Diaspora Academy participants

5. Peacebuilding roles and skills

The diaspora's contributions to peacebuilding take many forms, and the Diaspora Academy participants shared numerous stories that illustrate the many roles they assumed when doing their peace work, vignettes are included below. See, Annex 9.4: 'Diaspora, Strategic Peacebuilding Engagement' for an overview of the levels of engagement and activities, to help diaspora peacebuilders clarify their role and how to engage strategically in peacebuilding activities.

In practice, peacebuilding roles often overlap and merge. For example, as a diaspora peacebuilder, Stéphanie assumed many 'roles' and had to employ a range of skills both in the Netherlands and in Burundi, to make the 2004 trip possible.

Stéphanie, together with the BWPD: built bridges between the Burundian diaspora and Burundians at home, raised awareness about Burundi in the Netherlands, entered into strategic alliances with women from other cultures, lobbied Burundian political decision makers, advocated for development in Burundi, facilitated capacity building and skills development training, raised awareness on important societal issues in Burundi, transmitted values of democracy and challenged harmful practices that are taboo in Burundi, entered into partnerships with professional organisations, and became a role model, modelling leadership.

Implicit in the execution of these roles are knowledge sets and a plethora of skills, namely: to plan, fundraise, advocate, lobby, network, build relationships, raise awareness, dialogue, enter into partnerships/alliances, public relations, give interviews, wield influence using soft power.

The peacebuilding roles of diaspora, in no particular order, are: bridge-building, transmission of values, lobbying and advocacy, networking and partnership, dialogue and awareness, and experts and advisors.

Bridge-building

Bridge-building occurs at a few intersections for the diaspora: the personal work of reconciling many competing identities within, intergenerational bridge-building between parents raised in Africa and children raised in Europe,²¹ within the diaspora between conflicting views on the same conflict back home, and finally between home and host countries.

Personal work: During the Diaspora Academy, many participants came to the realisation that building peace is both an inward and outward movement. They spoke about learning how to survive in a new society, and balancing and juggling competing needs and responsibilities in both host and home countries. Participants expressed that peace work starts with the self, caring for the self and fostering inner peace through a regular practice (spiritual, religious, cultural rituals, etc.) that supports their outward peace work. Many participants draw deeply on the reservoir of their religion/tradition/culture in order to remain grounded through all the chaos, uncertainty and desperation presented in their daily life as diaspora.

Global perspective: Having traversed many 'realities' and shaped by experiences in both home and host countries, the diaspora often hold a more global perspective²² on issues. Their perception²³ of reality has also shifted and they are often able to place events in a broader perspective. Yera Dembele, originally from Mali, reflected on this during the training, when he said "We forget to mention that, as diaspora, you have a kind of an overview of the situation, not only in a particu-

²³ Rita Ogunfojuri was raised in Switzerland and her parents are from Nigeria; she describes herself as an 'Aphropean'.

²² Perspective (viewpoint) is the position and angle from which one views reality. Our perspective describes parts of reality that are not necessarily the whole truth.

lar area but also worldwide.”

Model another way: Mary Kuek observed that conflict in the diaspora is often a mirror reflection of conflict in the country of origin, and results in polarisation in the diaspora. “Since the current South Sudanese crisis started, my best friend, who is not from my ethnic group, does not talk to me anymore.” Fatumo Farah²⁴ shared that there was tribal conflict in a particular Somali region in 1998, but when the diaspora from these tribes came together to discuss the issue, the fighting stopped. She summarised by saying, “it can also be an opportunity [for the diaspora] to ‘mirror’ back [and ‘model’] another way to resolve the conflict in the home country.”

Transmission of values

In a globalised world, where all societies are experiencing rapid transformation, and the traditional socio-political and economic systems that held society together for generations are collapsing, traditional values and practices are rapidly changing as people struggle to survive and make meaning of life in the modern era. In this maelstrom, the diaspora has become a ‘carrier of values’ between societies.

Diaspora Academy participants spoke of values-based conflicts, which they see manifesting in personal relations and political life back home. Among other things, the following stood out: corruption and accountability, gender relations, and dependence and empowerment.

Corruption and accountability: Corruption is endemic in most African societies. Participants noted that corruption and lack of accountability in their home countries have resulted in a culture of impunity. For peace to take root, these practices need to be challenged through establishing and upholding the rule of law. Professor Gerd Junne emphasised the role diasporas can play in encouraging the changing of norms in their countries of origin. This can be done by supporting grass-roots mobilisation for change. He gave the example of the ‘No Corruption Zone’ sign he saw displayed at Kenya University, and challenged the diaspora to play a positive role in changing or challenging norms in their countries of origin through: supporting grass-roots movements that challenge corruption, and supporting the establishment of the rule of law in their home countries.

Gender relations: At a personal level, one issue at the core of social relations in most societies is gender relations. Conflict disrupts gender relations, which spill over into the private lives of ordinary women and men and often increase the burden on women and girls. Diaspora Academy participants observed the fallout on several fronts:

Lettie Chimbi who conducts training for women in Zimbabwe was challenged by men who asked her “why are you only training women?” The men felt left behind and excluded from opportunities. “Men are powerful in Africa so you cannot do anything without men, but in England they want [to fund] projects for women.” This creates a dilemma for the diaspora peacebuilder – do you continue training only women when it causes conflict between women and men after the training; and who are you accountable to, the donor or the local community?

Stéphanie acknowledged that the initially trainings in Burundi were only for women because she was angry with men. However, at one training session for women, the local mayor, who opened the event, said to her “Stéphanie, don’t think that women will achieve peace without men. After the training, the women will go back home and they will still have problems.” She did not want men at the training because they dominate discussions, which they did when she allowed a few

²³ Perception is the lense (‘sunglasses’) through which one perceives and makes sense of reality and the world. Your ‘lense’ is ‘coloured’ by your experience, history, age, education, class, gender, culture, beliefs, religion, location, etc. We are often unaware of our perceptions. Perceptions determine our beliefs, attitudes and actions.

²⁴ Fatumo Farah from HIRDA was an expert presenter during the Diaspora Academy. <http://www.hirda.org/en/home/>.

men to attend a training session. However, she realised the value of including men in the training; it would mean access to local men. Women trainers were not taken seriously by men in local communities, but mixed groups, which included women and men trainers, meant that local women and men would attend training sessions.

Participants also noted that existing forms of masculinity in Africa encourage, celebrate, and honour the use of violence. A 'real' African man is expected, by both women and men, to use violence. Both women and men continue to reproduce these images of masculinity, which takes on extreme forms during war or violent conflict. Participants agreed that the images of masculinity and manhood that glorify violence need to change, making the use of violence unacceptable.

Stéphanie said that there are good aspects in Western culture and good aspects in African cultures, but "we can learn from the West regarding gender equality; in Africa many girls cannot speak for themselves." The work has to be done by and with both women and men.

Dependence and empowerment: Salome Mbugua spoke about the damage done to people by the "charity model" of development; "they are waiting to receive" from donors and the diaspora. Ben Mussanzi wa Mussangu noted that "people in Africa tend to raise their hands to Europe," begging for money. He challenges Africans to stop begging and start funding themselves. This sentiment is echoed by Salome and, in response, she founded Wezesha²⁵ and AkiDwa, diaspora-led organisations focused on empowering local communities. "We are tired of people waiting to get remittances every month."

From her experience with local partners in Kenya and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Salome shared the following insights: the "diaspora should not make the mistake of just helping; it is more sustainable to let people do it for themselves. [...] But there are challenges because if you are Diaspora, people come to ask you for help." "[Local] people have the resources within themselves and they can use micro-finance." A key focus of her projects is to address the issue of "how to make the change so that people feel a need to become independent." For example, one project provides women with start-up capital to invest and create their own income. Salome has also learnt that, when in partnership with local partners, it is important that local partners know how to "create and take their own agenda," "understand their boundaries," and know "what their resources and added value are."

Diaspora Academy participants challenged diasporas to stop the 'charity model' of development in Africa, and to empower people. They highlighted the importance of identifying resources, particularly in poor communities.

Lobbying and advocacy

The involvement of the diaspora in peacebuilding can be as seen part of broader advocacy processes. Diasporas advocate for changes in policies or practice to bring about conditions more conducive to development,²⁶ and they lobby policymakers to act in favour of their interests. Lobbying is an important tool used by diasporas in their advocacy efforts, be it on issues of development, commerce or conflict. Lobbying skills are thus essential to access political, financial, human and other types of support for effective peacebuilding processes.

Diaspora Academy participants used advocacy and lobbying as an integral part of their peacebuilding endeavours. Ben Mussanzi wa Mussangu of Centre Résolution Conflits (CRC)²⁷ shared

²⁵ Wezesha (Swahili for 'enable' or 'empower') was established in 2010. It is a diaspora-led development organisation with a head office in Ireland, and partner projects in Kenya and DRC www.wezeshadada.com

²⁶ Brinkerhoff, (January 2006); Cohen (1997).

²⁷ <http://centreresolutionconflits.org/>.

how CRC organised the Bradford Congo Campaign, which launched a postcard campaign to raise awareness and advocate on behalf of Congolese people, and to lobby parliament in the United Kingdom. The campaigns are called 'Blood in your mobile'²⁸ (2013) and 'Stop the Rape of the DRC' (2014-2016). The 'Blood in your mobile' campaign forced the hand of William Hague,²⁹ who travelled with Angelina Jolie³⁰ to the East of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), visiting, among others, hospitals like www.healafrika.org in Goma, where raped babies, girls, women and grandmas are brought to heal. On his return from DRC, Mr. Hague's office organised the widely-attended 'Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict' in 2014.³¹ Wezesha (Salome) created a 'map of the African Diaspora' in Ireland. The objective is to challenge the 'useless African' stereotype and show that, though educated, the African diaspora is poor, because they cannot find jobs due to discrimination. The diaspora also has many 'issues', including trauma, and no help. Wezesha want to advocate for these issues and use the map to lobby relevant decision makers and institutions.

Stéphanie shared how 23 women from the Burundian Diaspora in Europe came together at a conference in June 2002, and successfully lobbied for the Burundian diaspora to participate in the peace process by writing a letter to Nelson Mandela, the mediator during the Burundian peace negotiations. The letter explained that Burundians in the diaspora want to contribute to peace in their home country and should be included in the peace negotiation process.

Networking and partnership

Networks usually perform the following functions: promoting dialogue and sharing of information, convening relevant organisations or people, analysing problems at different levels, mobilising and rationalising the use of resources for its members and strengthening international consciousness, commitment and solidarity.³² The diaspora benefits from partnerships or networks in a wide range of areas to advance their cause of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The diaspora also actively uses social networking sites to keep in touch and promote their causes.

Diaspora partnerships and cooperation: Regarding diaspora partnerships and cooperation with local, grass-roots movements, Professor Gerd Junne emphasised the role diasporas can play by supporting grass-roots mobilisation for change. The 'No Corruption Zone' campaign at Kenya University shows that peacebuilding work does not always begin by partnering with the national government. It highlights the importance of diasporas partnering with local governments, authorities and other civil society organisations in order to facilitate peacebuilding. On a larger scale, diasporas also need to seek partnership among regional and international organizations dealing with their own particular area of interest.

'A letter for peace': During a period of intense conflict in the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998-2002), Habtom Yohannes of the Eritrean Diaspora used IKON, a Dutch Public Broadcasting Station, to advocate for peace and to call on Ethiopians and Eritreans to protest against the war and "come together and work hand in hand against war as a solution for conflicts." Despite receiving support from the Dutch government and NGOs, he did not get much support from the Eritrean and Ethiopian diasporas, because people were afraid to digress from their respective government's position. Determined, Habtom continued to network and struggle for justice and peace on a personal level. He shared his ideas with the Dutch Inter-church Aid (DIA), and received support from them, which allowed him to write "A letter for peace" addressed to the late prime minister of Ethiopia, Mr. Meles Zenawi and the president of Eritrea, Mr. Isaias Afwerki. Habtom approached 50 influential personalities across the globe for their support and signature; the aim was

²⁸ See Annex 2: 'Blood in your mobile' a photo of the postcard.

²⁹ William Hague, Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs (United Kingdom) between May 2010 and July 2014.

³⁰ Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/sexual-violence-in-conflict>.

³² Assessing Progress on the Road to Peace – Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities (May 2008) Issue Paper 5.

to encourage these people to support peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The letter was signed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, former Minister of Defense of the United States, Robert McNamara and more than 30 other international personalities and laureates.

African Diaspora Peace Network: Diaspora Academy participants proposed that a loose network be established, where the African diaspora and 'Friends of Africa' (individuals or institutions) interested in supporting 'Peace in Africa' can come to be inspired, learn, share their peacebuilding projects and experience support, innovation and creativity. This network could be attached to other initiatives, for example, the annual Caux conference, the annual Diaspora Academy, or the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict Foundation (GPPAC).

Dialogue and awareness

Dialogue is a "way of communicating with a focus on understanding 'the other', rather than convincing him/her that you are right."³³ It enables diaspora organisations and mainstream sectors to engage on a continuing basis, to learn from each other and to regularly exchange information, best ideas and practices. Dialogue also provides an avenue to address misinformation, thereby dealing with stereotypes and other factors that hinder progress. Raising awareness about a situation or issue is another strategy used by the diaspora in peacebuilding, to inform as many people as possible about a given conflict or issue.

Several Diaspora Academy participants use arts and culture to do peacebuilding; they use their creative abilities as their medium to do peacebuilding work, both in the diaspora and at home. Sorie Obai Kamara (Obi Phrase), the Sierra Leone Music Ambassador to Europe, uses music to raise awareness and inform people about the war in Sierra Leone, and more recently the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone. He wrote and recorded the song 'No more war',³⁴ which pleads for peaceful democratic transitions in Guinea and the Mano River Union basin.

Masud Abdi taps into the rich vein of Somali oral tradition (poetry, drama, music and debate), which is apparently still very much alive in the Somali diaspora, to facilitate dialogue and community cohesion. During the Diaspora Academy, Masud demonstrated the power of this tradition, by writing a response to a traditional Somali battle cry for war and challenging it with a call for peace!

<i>This poem is a gun³⁵</i>	This poem is a seed ³⁶
<i>This poem's an assassin</i>	This poem will be a tree
<i>Images mob my mind . . .</i>	This tree will provide shade for peace
<i>This pen is a spear, a knife</i>	this poem I sow into my nation's soil
<i>A branding-iron, an arrow</i>	like pen from an ink into the paper
<i>Tipped with righteous anger</i>	so a tree shall come forth where peace
<i>It writes with blood and bile</i>	will grow

Advisors and experts

Diaspora can be both internal and/or external promoters of peacebuilding. As Kathleen Newland

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Obi Phrase song: 'no more war' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxwKgggv-28>.

³⁵ Traditional Somali poem that is a battle cry rallying people to war!

³⁶ A response to the battle cry, calling for peace; written by Masud Abdi during the Diaspora Academy training, October 2016.

points out, “the benefits and unique strengths of both Diaspora groupings [keen cultural awareness of communities of origin, better awareness of specific needs and/or potential pitfalls, long term personal commitment to projects and communities] and international development agencies [larger funding capacity, professional/technical expertise and experience, efficiency through economies of scale, credibility] can all be magnified through effective collaboration.”³⁷ That said, the dominant experience of Diaspora Academy participants is a sense of not being valued as experts on their home countries by “big organisation experts”; “they don’t network [and consult] with us.”

That said, there are initiatives that value Diaspora expertise; for example, the Connecting Diaspora for Development Project (CD4D),³⁸ an International Organization for Migration (IOM) project in the Netherlands, which facilitates the return of professions to their country of origin through an innovative project called the ‘Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals’ (TRQN). The project links diaspora members with Dutch residency to institutions in their countries of origin. The following African countries are currently eligible: Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco and Somalia. The project aims to exchange the knowledge and skills of migrants for the reconstruction and development of their country of origin. CD4D supports the priorities and development strategies of the countries of origin of diaspora experts.

Diaspora organisations can also be creative and create opportunities for short-term immersion experiences into the country of origin, especially for diaspora youth. This allows them to build a relationship with the country of origin while using their skills and abilities; for example, for professional exchanges, music, film and photography.

Social development and economic investment

Diaspora, as peace builders, are increasingly able to promote transnational ties both as internal and external promoters of peacebuilding. Some activities that promote internal peacebuilding are: temporary return migration, diaspora entrepreneurship and civil society participation. External promotion of peacebuilding includes: investment and remittances, promotion of human rights and democracy and community development driven initiatives.

Uneven development: Abdi-Hakim Yusuf noted that diaspora communities often direct investment or remittances to family, resulting in uneven development in the same village. Remittances create dependency and a sense of entitlement among recipients, leading to resentment on the part of the sender and under-development of the receiving family in relation to other families in the same community. The challenge is how to optimise the use of remittances for the common good of the whole community, as opposed to only benefitting individual families. Mohammed Seid urged diasporas to use their collective remittances to fund Asset-Based Community Development, by challenging diaspora communities abroad to compete in investments that benefit the larger community; for example, building hospitals, clinics, community centres or schools.

United on development: Fatumo Farah shared that the Somali diaspora is divided on political issues, but cooperates on issues of social and humanitarian development directed to their community or country of origin. She noted that this level of cooperation needs political maturity, leadership and a dual strategy to unify and organise both the diaspora and the receiving local village/community.

The cost is high: The experience of Diaspora Academy participants when sending money or goods to assist communities back home was largely frustrating and negative. The administrative

³⁷ Newland and Patrick. (2004).

³⁸ <http://www.iom-nederland.nl/en/migratie-en-ontwikkeling/connecting-diaspora-for-development>.

processes are often cumbersome, unclear or difficult to navigate, and they have to factor in the high cost of fees, high import taxes or bribes to officials, which simply makes sending stuff home prohibitively expensive. The cost is high – in terms of money, time and energy.

6. Policy relevance (for peacebuilding)

How is all this relevant to policymakers? The business of policymakers is to create policy and approve budgets that underpin the smooth workings of the state and society. The policies and budget together create and shape the reality of all people living in that country. The diaspora, as part of society, is therefore directly impacted by policymakers' decisions, both in host and home countries. Both countries have a responsibility to this constituency, but each have a different relationship to the diaspora and this, by extension, implies different policy implications and actions for the host and home countries. Likewise, diaspora communities and organisations, as an important partner in this relationship, also have a responsibility to organise themselves.

Country of origin

A home country's responsibilities to its diaspora is to encourage and facilitate their continued civil, social, economic and political participation. The diaspora's interest in maintaining ties with the country could be for business or pleasure, namely, to visit family and friends, to start business ventures or community development projects. The home country can only benefit from assisting the diaspora by capitalising on their resources, skills and networks, which can contribute to peace and development at home. Countries with a hostile relationship to their diaspora, ignore their diaspora at their own peril.

From a peacebuilding perspective, the country of origin can develop legislation, budgets and administrative procedures:

- To encourage civil and political involvement of diasporas in home country.
- To facilitate fast and cheap transfer of money, travel and goods.
- To attract diasporic business investment.
- To enable local community development projects.
- To develop modern infrastructure linked into global systems of communication and financial services.

Country of residence

A host country's responsibilities to diaspora communities are to help them settle in, integrate and participate in the host society. Stephanie's case illustrates how a host country, in her case, the Netherlands, supported her family to settle in and supported her peace work in Burundi. That said, diasporas cannot assume support from their host countries, support will often depend on the host country's political leanings and economic well-being.

From a peacebuilding perspective, the country of residence can develop legislation, budgets and administrative procedures:

- To communicate with diasporas about their needs.
- To access and utilise diasporas profession skills (facilitate brain gain)
- To engage diasporas and use their expertise, insights and knowledge when making decisions related to their respective countries of origin.
- To provide essential and tailored services to diaspora communities, serving their specific needs as a distinct community.
- To support diasporas in their peacebuilding endeavours through funding, skills training and support for diaspora organisations capacity and institutional development; for example, invest in leadership training for diasporas.
- To establish a Diaspora Policy Dialogue task team or forum to engage with the policy envi-

ronment and allow diasporas to participate at different levels of decision-making – municipal, regional and national – while simultaneously including stakeholders with different perspectives thereby ensuring effective policy is developed at different levels.

The diaspora

The diaspora's responsibilities are to *foster unity while celebrating the diversity within, and engage constructively with both home and host countries*. From a peacebuilding perspective, the diaspora should use all opportunities available to them, to fully realise their potential in contributing to peace in their countries of origin:

- To develop leadership.
- To promote country of origin.
- To host initiatives and activities that bring the diaspora together to celebrate, 'fight' and unite.
- To become aware and educated about the many opportunities available in the host society.
- To utilise services provided for the diaspora – skills development training, etc.
- To access help if needed – for domestic violence, trauma, depression and anxiety.
- To provide orientation and support for new comers in the diaspora.

7. Policy recommendations (for peacebuilding)

Diasporas can play a strategic role in peacebuilding in their country of origin by being engaged before, during and after violent conflict and by supporting post-conflict reconstruction through investing in or facilitating initiatives. These initiatives range from advocacy and lobbying in host countries, to dialogue processes, relief projects, development and reconstruction. This is only possible due to the unique position of knowledge and relations diasporas have in their respective countries of residence and origin. Diaspora as a community possess resources and have access to international organisations, international media and powerful host governments as well as links and capital in their countries of origin, which enable them to cover a unique bridging position.

Ways of engaging the diaspora to promote peace in their countries of origin:

1. *Goal-driven programme structure:* Proposed programme goals to be identified at the outset, in consultation with the diaspora community, if appropriate. The goals will determine the structure of the programme, issues discussed and when to engage particular groups.
2. *Tap into diaspora expertise:* It is indisputable that diasporas can either fuel conflicts or help resolve them, either directly or indirectly. In cases of fuelling conflicts, hardline diaspora positions may constrain the ability of actors in the home country to propose different ways of understanding the struggle or to engage in constructive conflict resolution. Diaspora facilitators may need to adapt their programme to overcome impasses to dialogue among participants, in order to meet the needs and demands of diaspora communities.
3. *Take heterogeneous nature of diaspora into account:* The diaspora is not a homogenous body with the same perceptions of their country of origin. Accordingly, their different traits and background must be taken into account for appropriate and effective engagement in promoting peace. It is important to distinguish between the different groups that comprise the diaspora, and examine how they relate to the issues and policies in their country of origin. Adopt a cautious approach that refrains from generalising diaspora into one single group.
4. *Increase communication and dialogue among diaspora:* Every diaspora community/group has different motivations for engaging in the peace process. As a result, they have different needs from a diaspora programme, from negotiations training to analysis of similar conflicts. The diaspora could effectively engage in the peace process with their countries of origin by strengthening communication and dialogue among and within diaspora communities in their host countries.
5. *Gender:* It is important to view women and men in the diaspora not only as victims of war, but as agents for peace. Thus, requiring gender balance representation as a criterion for funding or engagement would ensure a balance gender representation and contribute to effective engagement of diasporas in promoting peace in their countries of origin.
6. *Develop civil oriented activities:* Civil oriented activities could also be appropriate and an effective means of engaging diasporas in promoting peace in their countries of origin.

The policy options for developing civil oriented activities include:

Development of community and business investment among diaspora. The literature discussing the role of diaspora in peacebuilding focusses on the potential contribution of diaspora for rehabilitation of infrastructure, both through direct financial investment and the application of knowledge to development activities. In Somalia, remittances were found to support the development and expansion of communication technologies and financial service mechanisms throughout the conflict. In many countries, both financial and social capital brought by the diaspora contribute to

long-haul reconstruction needs, and are available after donor commitments have shrunk.³⁹

Civil and political involvement of diasporas in countries of origin. Diaspora can engage directly in peacebuilding through activities that contribute to civil and political structures and their rehabilitation. Such activities include participation in the drafting and ratification of political documents, engagement in political parties and elections, and support of civil society groups. For example, the Eritrean diaspora contributed to the drafting of the referendum for independence in 1993. Following independence, the diaspora further contributed to the drafting and eventual ratification of the constitution of the new state.⁴⁰

Advocacy and lobbying. Diasporas can use their soft power to leverage political influence through activities such as lobbying and advocacy campaigns in the country of residence and country of origin:

- Programmes may build trust by encouraging cooperation and discouraging the diaspora from playing a spoiler role in the conflict. This programme goal is especially important in highly contentious conflicts, where the potential for consensus is low and the need to increase cooperation among diaspora communities is significant.
- Engagement in discussions about conflict may infuse realistic ideas and recommendations in peace processes, which may be particularly useful leading up to negotiations to provide a platform for peace negotiators.
- Diaspora may influence other political actors in peace processes through the use of soft power. With their position as key partners to socio economic development coupled with their wide transnational capacities, diaspora groups can exert political pressure in their home country towards peace and conflict resolution.
- Engagement programmes should train diaspora to build their capacity and skills sets to effectively support the peace process.
- Other programme goals may include building internal and external political support for the peace process.
- Diasporas engagement programmes may promote post-conflict political and economic development, allowing the diaspora to contribute productively to the development of the post-conflict state.

Every effort should be made to recognise diaspora members as key stakeholders and to incorporate them in public dialogue on peace and democracy.

³⁹ Brinkerhoff (2011

⁴⁰ Koser (2007).).

8. Conclusion

Drawing heavily on the peacebuilding experience of Diaspora Academic participants and research on peacebuilding, the deliberation in this paper concludes with the following:

The African diaspora plays a strategic role in contributing to peace in their country of origin. They are actively engaged in peacebuilding initiatives, using their soft power potential in a myriad of ways, in both their countries of residence and countries of origin. Their peacebuilding engagement can only be further enhanced through knowledge, access to information and through strategic support and partnerships.

Knowledge and information

For more effective peacebuilding interventions, diasporas need to know certain types of knowledge and information. The diaspora should understand and know how to navigate or access the following:

- political systems and institutions, in their host and home countries
- policy and policy development cycles, in their host and home countries
- international policy and institutional frameworks
- networks for peacebuilding
- conflict cycles and conflict analysis
- peacebuilding and conflict transformation approaches to managing and resolving conflict

Engaging the diaspora to promote peace

Diaspora peacebuilding cannot be achieved in isolation:

- The impact of diaspora peacebuilding initiatives can be maximised through networking and partnerships with other stakeholders at national and international levels.
- Through networks of local development partners and their respective partnerships, diasporas can benefit from dialogue and information sharing, mobilisation of resources and coordination of diaspora and activities.
- Furthermore, lobbying and advocacy should be proactive and well-coordinated, to show the legitimacy of the diaspora representatives during advocacy, which may be challenged due to the heterogeneous nature of the diaspora.

9. Annexes

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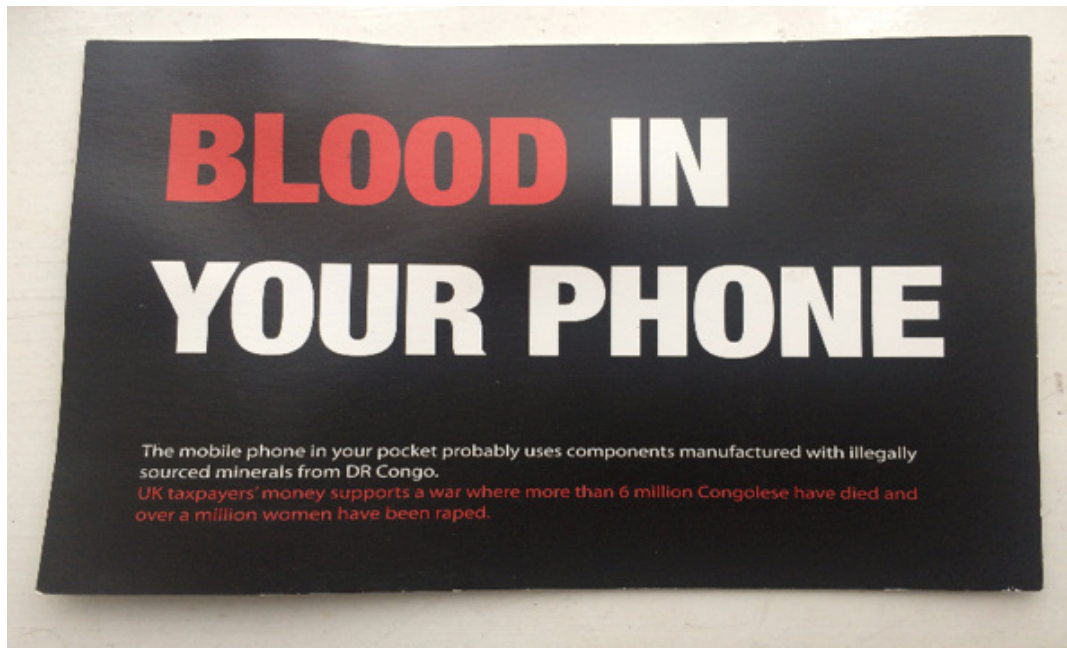
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<http://www.creativeconflictresolution.org>

9.2 Annex 2: 'Blood in your mobile'

Bradford Congo Campaign's postcard campaign: 'Blood in your mobile'



9.3 ADPC resource library

Here you will find various documents as outlined in the research.

Peacebuilding concepts

- Hazel Smith and Paul Stares ` Diasporas in conflict: Peace-makers or peace-wreckers, United Nations University Press, 2007
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Feel free to make use of the resources for your own use, but be sure to provide references, in particular regarding the articles, guidebooks, etc. These resources cover a range of topics on the peacebuilding research.

We hope you will find these resources helpful in your peacebuilding endeavours.

9.4 Diaspora, strategic peacebuilding engagement

On the next page: an overview of the levels of engagement and activities, to help diaspora peace builders clarify their role and to engage strategically in peacebuilding activities. Developed by Jasmin Nordien, March 2017.

Level of engagement	Purpose	Direct engagement - money, goods, ideas -	Indirect engagement - activities to sanction or benefit the country of origin-
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hold and reconcile the many aspects of self Self-care and growth Settle self and family Adapt /integrate into new context Safety and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a home, schools Find work Counselling/support for: trauma, depression, loss, domestic violence ... (if needed) Civic education: learn how things work in new society – systems, culture, attitudes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a new community Find a faith community Friendship circle Foster new relationships Mentorship Renegotiate gender roles and responsibilities in the family
Diaspora community in host society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To unite diaspora Organise activities Celebrate culture, tradition, identity ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building trainings (identify needs of community: leadership, conflict resolution, communication ...) Celebrate arts and culture Fundraise for community and infrastructure development projects back home Language & culture classes (country of origin) Cooking classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a common vision for peace Strategies and activities to unite the diaspora Document what is happening back home and publish, share Diaspora think tank, experts on their country of origin to give interview, write opinion pieces, or blog etc. Media spokespersons, media strategy, press packages
Host society (resident)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settle in to host society Integrate Contribute to host society Promote country of origin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> learn language, culture study work further education and skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby and advocate, petition Network with policymakers (local municipalities, region and national) Network with media Invite artists, musicians, poets (from home) to perform Organise lectures tours for speakers/prominent thinkers/journalists /authors from home Write opinion pieces for media Give interviews (use freedoms in host society to speak out on issues silenced in country of origin)
Country of origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stabilise or destabilise (not peacebuilding) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remittances (family, community projects – health, education ...) Entrepreneurial investments Infrastructure development (water, roads, community buildings, schools ...) Short-term immersion programmes for second-generation youth Short-term professional exchange, to go back home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cooperate on social and humanitarian development Transfer of values Lobby Advocate Network at all levels of society Organise for community leaders, journalists, and politicians ... to receive training abroad
Regional/Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence policy and economic impacting on country of origin Influence regional and international organisations: AU, EU, UN, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training on the policy planning process, and how to exert leverage Network and build strategic relationships with relevant institutions, media, NGOs, politicians, business leaders, scholars, etc.) Organise protests, boycotts, campaigns, targeted sanctions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby Advocate Strategy and planning

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