The participation of Liberian diasporas in peace building in Liberia



**Name:** Yerobailo Bah

**Class:** ES4-4

**Student Number:** 11041773

**Supervisor:** Mrs. Michaela Anghel

**Date of Completion:** August 29, 2017

Academy of European Studies

The Hague University of Applied Sciences

# Executive Summary

Due to the globalization of communication and transport, diaspora have become important actors in development, peace and conflict resolution in their countries of origin. Although the impact of diasporas’ engagement in peace and conflict processes is highly contested by certain researchers and or practitioners, the role of the Diaspora in their countries of origin is increasingly recognized by decision-makers and the research community as well, both in the countries of origin and in the countries of residence. For example, various African states have established Diasporas departments or ministries to further institutionalize state-diasporas relations, while in the countries of residence, governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations are looking for ways to involve Diasporas members and organizations in their developmental and integration endeavors (Warnecke, 2010, p.4). Moreover, the intervention methods of Diasporas organizations in peace building and development processes are very wide ranging from operational to advocacy and lobbying activities.

The main objective of this study was to investigate the effective participation of the Liberian Diasporas in the Netherlands in peace building activities in the country of origin. Therefore, the central question reads as: How effective is the participation of Liberian Diasporas organizations in the Netherlands in peace building activities in the country of origin? During the research, both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data was collected through three individual interviews, with the aim of providing more insight into the organizational structure and the practices of Liberian Diasporas associations and certain Dutch development NGOs in peace building processes. The secondary data based on desk research was collected by consulting online scientific articles, and academic reports written by researchers and policy-makers.

The research reveals that major Liberian Diasporas associations in the Netherlands are formally established, though they virtually operate informally. In other words, most of the associations are formally registered, but it is very hard to identify them because they are not well organized and are not functioning effectively. Although the extent in which Diasporas are engaging in peace building processes is very significant, it turns out that Diasporas also encounter genuine challenges simultaneously. These challenges include lack of financial resources, the internal dispute between Diasporas groups and lack of trust and cooperation’s between Diasporas and authorities in the country of origin. However, in order to overcome this obstruction, it is suggested that the Diasporas should increase their cooperation, professionalize their peace building activities, and focus on the capacity building of its members and local partners in country of origin.

# Table of contents

[Executive Summary 0](#_Toc491781122)

[Table of contents 3](#_Toc491781123)

[List of abbreviations: 5](#_Toc491781124)

[1. Introduction 6](#_Toc491781125)

[2. Methodology 8](#_Toc491781126)

[*2.1.* *Primary data* 8](#_Toc491781127)

[*2.2.* *Secondary data* 9](#_Toc491781128)

[3. Definition of peace building and peace building elements 10](#_Toc491781129)

[4. The role of NGO’s in peace building 14](#_Toc491781130)

[5. Diasporas as an important stakeholder in peace building processes 18](#_Toc491781131)

[*5.1.* *Challenges to Diasporas engagement* 20](#_Toc491781132)

[*5.2.* *Key criteria for constructive engagement* 21](#_Toc491781133)

[6. Methods of operation of NGOs in peace building 25](#_Toc491781134)

[*6.1.* *African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC)* 26](#_Toc491781135)

[*6.2.* *Centre of Collective Learning and Action (CCoLA)* 28](#_Toc491781136)

[*6.3.* *Civil Society for Peace building and State building (CSPPS)* 30](#_Toc491781137)

[7. Dutch initiatives in engaging the Diaspora in peace building 33](#_Toc491781138)

[*7.1. Co-financing Agencies and Links* 34](#_Toc491781139)

[*7.2. Diaspora empowerment* 35](#_Toc491781140)

[8. Liberian diasporas organizations in the Netherlands 37](#_Toc491781141)

[*8.1. Typology of associations: structures, scopes, and membership* 37](#_Toc491781142)

[*8.2. Liberian Association Holland (LAH)* 39](#_Toc491781143)

[*8.3.* *Bengoma association* 40](#_Toc491781144)

[*8.4.* *The role of Liberian Diasporas in peace building in the country of origin* 40](#_Toc491781145)

[*8.5.* *Challenges to the Liberian Diasporas organizations* 42](#_Toc491781146)

[9. Conclusions 45](#_Toc491781147)

[10. Recommendations 48](#_Toc491781148)

[11. References 49](#_Toc491781149)

[12. Appendices: 51](#_Toc491781150)

[Appendix 1: Student Ethics Form 51](#_Toc491781151)

[Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form – LAH 53](#_Toc491781152)

[Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form - Bengoma 54](#_Toc491781153)

[Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form – CCoLA 55](#_Toc491781154)

[Appendix 5: Interview Transcript – LAH 56](#_Toc491781155)

[Appendix 6: Interview Transcript – Bengoma 64](#_Toc491781156)

[Appendix 7: Interview Transcript – CCoLA 73](#_Toc491781157)

# List of abbreviations:

ADPC African Diaspora Policy Centre

AUADS African Union African Diasporas Sixth region

CCoLA Centre of Collective Learning and Action

CSOs Civil Society organizations in Sierra Leone

CSPPS Civil Society Platform for Peace building and State building

ECOWAS Economic Community of West African States

LAH Liberian Association Holland

NGO’s Non-Governmental Organizations

UN United Nations

UNMIL United Nations Mission in Liberia

WRR Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy

# Introduction

The peace building context is an interesting research subject, especially for post-conflict and developing countries like Liberia. As Liberia is making progress away from the civil war and Ebola crisis, there are still challenges to the long-term sustainability of peace and development, while new forms of social and political unrest continue to affect the lives of many citizens and slow down the country’s peaceful and development process. Despite the intervention of the international peacekeeping forces like United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and ECOWAS, many things still need to be done in order to enhance the peace and development process in Liberia. For example, UNMIL mentioned in its latest report that " Liberia has made great strides towards peace, but more needs to be done" (Now the hard work begins, 2015). Also, Bekoe and Parajon (2006) argue that “While Liberia remains peaceful; its grim social and economic conditions present formidable obstacles to its reconstruction and reconciliation efforts (p.1)”.

This means that in order to build sustainable peace in Liberia, all stakeholders, including the Liberian diaspora, need to collaborate and contribute accordingly. As the peace building process involve multiple actors, this research concentrates on investigating the practices of Liberian diaspora in the Netherlands in the peace building process in the country of origin. The engagement of diaspora in peace building is vital and is formally recognized by the international community. For instance, in 2004 the African Union formally recognized the African Diaspora as the ‘sixth region’ of the continent, and describe diaspora as "people of African descent who live outside the African continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union (AUADS, 2013). Furthermore, nowadays diaspora communities are increasingly becoming important actors in the peace building process. Various Diaspora individuals and organizations are participating in post-conflict reconstruction, by providing social remittance, lobbying activities, capacity building and empowerment, direct involvement in political processes, and the execution of humanitarian and social development projects.

Seeing that there are many Liberian diaspora in the Netherlands, it is certainly worthwhile to find out how effective are the Liberian diaspora organizations in the Netherlands in their participation in peace building activities in country of origin. Firstly, this research paper attempts to answer some questions related to peace building, the role of NGO’s in peace building, the working methods of certain international peace building and development NGO’s, and Dutch initiatives in engaging diasporas in peace building. Secondly, the final discussion of this research paper, focuses on scrutinizing the organization of Liberian diaspora and their engagement in the peace building process in their country of origin. In order to lay out the effectiveness of Liberian Diaspora participation in peace building and eventually provide them with a useful recommendation that will help them to strengthen their participation, it is very important to examine their organizational structure, their participation strategies, and skills.

# Methodology

This research paper was conducted through the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. In order to complete this research, the following sub-questions were initiated and investigated: a) what is meant by peace building? b) What are the roles of NGOs in peace building? c) How many Liberian NGOs are present in the Netherlands? And how are they functioning? d) How are the Dutch and other International NGOs participating in peace building? e) In what way is the Dutch government stimulating Diasporas to engage in peace building activities? f) And how can Liberian NGOs improve their peace building strategies, following the example of successful NGOs like ADPC and CCoLA.

### *Primary data*

First of all concerning questions (c) and (f), information was collected through three individual interviews. More specifically, in order to assess the engagement of Liberian diasporas in the peace building process in the country of origin, two interviews were held with board members of two Liberian diasporas organizations based in the Netherlands, namely the Liberian Association Holland (LAH) and Bengoma. The selection of the Liberian Associations Holland (LAH) as respondent is related to the fact that the organization is the mother organization of all Liberian sister organizations in the Netherlands, and thus it represents all diasporas groups. Next to that, Bengoma Association was selected because it encompasses the largest Liberian migrant group in the Netherlands. In order to be able to answer question (d), a third interview was held with the co-founder of CCoLA. This NGO was founded by a number of African migrants in collaboration with Dutch citizens and development organizations.

Due to the informal practices of diaspora organizations, collecting data was only possible through qualitative interviews; therefore, within the selection phase, contacts were established through the telephone to arrange a suitable meeting date for all parties. Before approaching the respondents, interview guidelines were developed to help the interviewer pilot the interview. The first subset of questions focuses on the history and structure of the organizations, issues of religious, ethnic, community cohesion or divisions as well as the extent of formal structure (level of professionalism, funding sources, etc). The second sub-set of questions essentially seeks to generate some information on the group's main purpose and its role in peace building processes in the country of origin; and the organization's chances and limitations.

Finally, the third set of questions is about networking activities and interactions with other diaspora and non-diasporas organizations: What kinds of organization do the diaspora groups collaborate with (local, national, and transnational contacts)? All interviews which were conducted in residences of respondents were recorded in accordance with the respondents. After completing the interviews, taped information was transcribed and later processed into the report.

Throughout this study, there were several challenges to the research itself, especially in terms of finding well-organized diaspora groups that are willing to cooperate. Although all respondents were excited about the study and showed full cooperation, some were reluctant in answering certain questions widely. The willingness to participate in the research process largely depended on the respondents’ perceptions of the conflict and peace building processes in their country of origin, personal and/or political background. For example, sensitive questions are often briefly or indirectly answered. In addition, it was hard to find information on diaspora organizations because only few organizations have websites or uses social media (such as face book) to introduce themselves or promote their activities.

### *Secondary data*

Furthermore, in order to successfully answer the remaining sub-questions (a, b, d, and e), relevant online academic resources and organizations’ websites and reports were consulted. It was easier to find information on peace building and development through secondary data than through the primary data. For instance, academic reports from the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), and African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) websites were consulted. These literatures were very important in describing the peace building context, the methods of NGOs and the role of diaspora organizations in peace building processes. Also, additional reliable information were attained through visiting Dutch government and Cordaid websites. The reports founded provided a broad insight on the initiatives of the Dutch government in engaging diaspora in peace building and the role of NGOs in peace building. In general, the information gathered through desk research were useful in terms of completing this research paper, and are believed to be reliable as it comes from governments and scientific researchers.

# Definition of peace building and peace building elements

In the following section, the definition of peace building and peace-building elements are briefly provided. This section tries to explain the complexity of the peace building process and its’ operations. Also, it offers an overview of different stakeholders that could be very relevant in terms of conflict resolution and peace building. However, the reader should bear in mind that the sequence of peace building priorities presented below could differ per country. Each country has different conflict issues and thus might require a different approach.

Peace building is a very broad and complex discourse that involves many different actors at different levels. In the past, various professionals and peace makers have made many attempts to define peace building. For example, in 1992 the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali described peace building as an “action to identify and support structures, which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (What is Peace building, 2014). Also, in 2007 the UN Secretary-Generals’ Policy Committee introduced a new and more detailed definition of peace building and described it as: A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peace building strategies must be coherent and to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives (What is Peace building, 2014).

In other words, peace building means supporting post-conflict countries to secure sustainable peace more rapidly and effectively. In the post-conflict period, the leadership and the people of the country encounter enormous challenges, such as fluid situation, lack of peace and security, an urgent needs and lack of resources. However, in order to achieve a successful peace building process and prevent states relapsing into violence, certain conditions have to be fulfilled in the early post-conflict period: a full partnership and coordination among the regional and international actors, a full inclusiveness of countries concerned, and a carefully prioritize and sequenced peace building activities. It is also extremely important that national and international efforts focused on meeting the most urgent peace building objectives, like establishing basic safety and security, supporting the political processes, supporting the provision of the basic services (water, sanitation, health and primary education), enhancing core national capacity and restoring core government function. As the UN peace building committee emphasized, “peace building should be a transformative process that focused on enhancing the social cohesion and build trust between social groups, strengthening institutions, building institutions and capacity of individuals, authorities communities, creating space for a wider set of actors – including women, youth, marginalized groups, civil society, and the private sector – to participate in national post-conflict decision-making, manage conflict and deliver sustainable services for peace” ( What is peace building, 2014).

In the immediate aftermath of conflict, post conflict countries and the international community face great challenges, especially within the first two years after the main conflict in a country has ended. The early phase of intervention in post-conflict areas is a very crucial moment. Lack of anarchy and basic security might cause a big threat to establishing a sustainable peace. Therefore, in order to secure a sustainable peace, the UN Peace building Commission suggested that countries must develop a vision and a strategy at the early phase that will succeed in addressing the urgent peace building objectives such as, basic security, delivering administrative and social services, build confidence in political process and strengthen core national capacity to lead peace building efforts (UN, Secretary – General, 2009). In this regard, the UN peace Commission described ‘national ownership and recurring peace building priorities’ as two most important and indispensable conditions that need to be met in terms of supporting national efforts to guarantee a sustainable peace. For example, the commission argued that “peace building is a national challenge and responsibility. Only national actors can address their society’s needs and goals in a sustainable way” (UN, Secretary – General, 2009, p.4).

In addition, within the peace building framework, a sensitive planning and balance are highly required in other to achieve the peace building objectives. More specifically, peace building operations need to be clearly prioritized and sequenced, because the successes of certain activities could depend on the achievement of other activities. Furthermore, Voorhoeve (2007) emphasizes that, “ensuring an effective and sustainable peace building process, requires good prioritizing and sequencing of peace building activities” (Voorhoeve, 2007, p.19). This means in a disorganization after political violence, many essential steps need to be taken by local, national and international leaders at the same time. The urgent needs are many and are very hard to prioritize: more troops to ensure security, more medical aid, emergency relief, ruined infrastructure needs to be repaired, mines have to be cleared, and refugees need protection and assistance to return safely to their homes. Everything needs to be there at once, which is of course not possible. Priorities have to be set and proper sequencing has to be managed.

Peace building operations are categorized in the following eight elements:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Task | Activities | Peace building organisations |
| 1. Ending violence | Political and diplomatic actions to arrange a cease-fire and facilitate a peace agreement. | UN, NATO, regional organizations or ad hoc coalitions |
| 1. Emergency assistance | Food, medicine, water, shelter. | Red Cross, NGOs, UN-agencies, regional organizations |
| 1. Disarmament, de-mobilisation, reintegration, and de-mining | Reduction of weapons and troops; collection and destruction of munitions; charting mine fields; demining of roads. | UN, NATO, regional security organizations |
| 1. Economic reconstruction | Restarting the economy; encouraging employment; reducing poverty; reconstruction of infrastructure; return of investors. | World Bank, IMF, Specialised UN organizations, EU, bilateral donors |
| 1. Transitional justice; reconciliation | Trials of local war criminals; reconciliation programs and ‘truth commissions’; trauma assistance; especially for children, women, wounded soldiers. | Legal assistance organizations; social and religious organizations, educational institutions, local govt. and media |
| 1. Legal Order | Monitoring, advising and training, of police and prosecutors; training of judges; renewal of laws; renewal of prison system; renewal of courts; trials of war crime suspects. | UN, regionalOrganisations, NGOs, bilateral donors, war crime tribunals, International Criminal Court |
| 1. New (democratic) government | New constitutional order; election for new leadership at local, regional and national level; political party formation. | UN, regional organizations, OSCE, IDEA, various NGOs and bilateral aid |
| 1. Refugee return | Return and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons. | UNHCR, World Bank, OCHA, bilateral donors, NGOs |

(Voorhoeve, 2007, p.24).

The above definitions illustrate that peace cannot be built by one or two actors in a country, it involves many national and international, formal and informal institutions.

All in all, peace building is a very broad and complex process that has many definitions. It involves various national and international organizations at different levels. In the immediate aftermath of conflict, affected nations and the international community may face high challenges, such as lack of control, basic security, and emergency relief, which could hinder the establishment of sustainable peace. However, in order to guarantee an effective and sustainable peace building process, peace building activities need to be well prioritized and sequenced. It is unlikely to design a standard intervention strategy for all conflict affected areas. The grassroots of conflict within countries might be different and thus required a different intervention approach. In addition, effective peace building requires collaboration and inclusiveness. This means that the participation of national government and local communities is very relevant and indispensable because they may know their society better, and thus are in the best position to address their needs.

# The role of NGO’s in peace building

Peace building interventions often involve various actors and operations at a time. Every actor has a different role to play. As this research paper focuses on the participation of the Liberian diaspora in peace building in their country of origin, the following pages tries to illustrate the role that NGOs and diaspora organizations would have to play in terms of peace building.

The extent of work and the involvement of NGOs and international actors in peace building varies from country to country, although all post-conflict situations could have a common rehabilitation and reconstruction process from short term actions, medium-term actions to long-term actions. In terms of post-conflict situations, “peace building and reconciliation must focus on promoting and strengthening social networks and local organizations that can act as elements of stability in the society” (Manuela Mesa Peinado, n.d., p.7). Providing support to beneficiaries like local NGOs, women’s associations and ethnic groups, could increase the capacities of the population and help excluded groups to get access to the most important institutions, like the judicial, administrative, and or the communications systems.

Due to the complexity of peace building process, it is unlikely for any international actor to handle or coordinate the post-conflict rehabilitation process alone. Both national and international actors have an important role to play during the peace building process. In this sense “Rehabilitation and reconstruction programs, from the perspective of NGOs, should not have as their aim the mere substitution or reparation of the infrastructure and the material resources damaged by a disaster. They should be presented in such a way that they strengthen administrative, social and economic administrations of the affected communities and contribute to re-establishing psychological well-being” (Manuela Mesa Peinado, n.d., p.8). This means that during the rehabilitation and reconstruction process, the focus of NGOs should mainly rely on the capacity building of local organizations, such as implementing peace building projects that could enable the affected population to overcome their situation by themselves.

The process of empowerment and the development of capacities are considered as the most important approaches that NGOs could implement in terms of humanitarian aids and rehabilitation. In post conflict societies, for example, the vulnerability and poverty of certain groups of the population are often exacerbated by discrimination and exclusion from public matters and from decision – making processes. In this regard, empowerment and capacity building is essential as it will help affected people to be stronger, less vulnerable and to have greater control over everything that affects their lives. In other words, empowering and capacity building of vulnerable communities could help them to be independent, less desperate and more inclusive. The participation of the local community and organizations that already exist in the community is a very important component of the development processes. In order to build a sustainable and lasting peace, affected societies alongside international agencies must collaborate effectively at all levels. Besides the inclusion of local communities, the use of local resources, wisdom, and attitudes during the rehabilitation process are also regarded as a relevant aspect that needs to be considered.

According to Peinado (n.d.), “certain actors of the civil society such as networks of human rights and peace groups, the independent media, community leaders and unions could play an important role in building bridges between polarized groups, promoting dialogue and reconciliation” (p.7). For example, in many societies, elders and religious leaders are highly respected, and their advices and contributions have an extensive influence in conflict resolution. Therefore, it is important that external peace and development agencies cooperate and establish a reliable relationship with local partners. Furthermore, establishing a lasting and prosperous peace requires checks and balances, freedom and democracy. Crowther (2001) mentioned that, “the population of a place or a country would need checks and balances on those who have the potential to transform conflict into abuse and violence” (p.6). This means that in order to be able to reduce the peoples’ vulnerability to abuse and escape from the grinding poverty and gross inequality, the people must be able to monitor, communicate and respond to the authorities adequately. In this regard, certain aspects like freedom of speech, freedom of association, and a free media must be guaranteed for the population.

Secondly, the people of the country would also need to have access to material and social recourses, services such as primary health care and education, independent access to markets, and access to bodies that regulate and enforce equal rights. However, in relation with monitoring government activities, various writers argue that NGOs have a little role to play because they have no power to enforce particular behaviors or to prohibit decision makers from implementing policies that would affect the population (Crowther, 2001). Nevertheless, NGOs might contribute in other ways. For example by helping to rebuild communication among previously warring people, as well as between local people and regional or national structures. Concerning the second point, it is argued that, NGOs are likely to be the main player and have many advantages over the government. Due to their voluntary nature, the ethical motivation of their staff and their intimate connection to grassroots values, NGOs have become the safe and effective channel through which external organizations could support local people initiatives. As Crowther (2001) emphasized, “they are more flexible, innovative and cost-effective, as well as a less bureaucratic means of reaching local people than local or national governments” (p.14). They are also capable of working independently and effectively even in a failing or collapsing local or national governments.

In contrasts, governments’ participation is regarded as less effective, because they don't have the local understanding and sensitivity or the flexibility required to rebuild local communities. For instance, it is argued that certain aspects of laws and bureaucratic procedures often generate obstacles which constrain the government endeavors to gain success in conflict transformation. The required laws and bureaucratic procedures make it difficult for the government to achieve negotiations between local parties. Although the government can recruit local staff to enhance their understanding, it could be more efficient if government support local NGOs to fulfill this role from their independent perspective. In general, the role of the international NGOs primarily relies on supporting and facilitating local actions. Therefore, INGOs, NGOs and diaspora organizations would have to focus on the empowerment and capacity building of local NGOs. Here, Crowther (2001), argued that, “the empowerment and capacity building process should start with the awareness of, and sensitivity to local partners needs and the creation of space where voices can be heard both locally, between different interest groups, and internationally, by lobbying, advocacy, and information diffusion” (p.14).

The practices of INGOs in peace building doesn’t mean imposing and dictating terms towards the local. Instead, the efforts of INGOs and diasporas organizations should generally concern with building the local capacity for change. These include trying to support what is needed locally by identifying and helping people and groups who are trying to fulfill their needs. In this context, it is the local groups that need to identify what action is required, and while the INGOs, on the other hand would have to raise the necessary funding, and or support the action in other ways, such as through training, technical advice or solidarity. Further, it is also mentioned that in recent years, INGOs and NGOs had to become more professional and more bureaucratic in order to demonstrate accountability and respond to the requirements of funders, like the correct paper work for funding and progress reporting.

# Effectiveness of diaspora engagement in peace building processes

In relation with the effective engagement of diasporas in peace building, the active role of diaspora in peace building and development has been increasingly recognized by the international community, individual governments, development institutions, and NGOs. Due to the transfers of social, financial, and cognitive resources they make, migrants are regarded as promoters of peace and development in their country of origin. In fact, diaspora groups are considered as relevant partners in conflict resolution and peace building. In order to strengthen the cooperation between diasporas organizations and other actors, such as international agencies, government institutions, and NGOs, diaspora groups must meet certain criteria. The following section looks at key criteria and challenges that are important for effective engagement of diasporas in peace building. The hope is that these conditions would help diaspora to identify the potential challenges and their weaknesses in terms of their engagement. Also, third parties may use it as a guide to select the qualified Diasporas organizations as partners.

Nowadays, not only national governments and international actors are concerned in the conflict and peace processes, but also diaspora communities. Diaspora groups are increasingly emerging as peacebuilding and development actors, actively engaging in their countries of origin. The involvement of individual diaspora members and organizations in conflict resolution is diverse, ranging from financial contributions, and direct involvement in political processes to humanitarian and developmental projects. For instance, in the field of financial contributions and the political processes, diaspora impact peace building by providing ‘social remittances, raising awareness and or supporting their communities through lobbying campaigns and demonstrations in their residence countries. The role of the diaspora in their countries of origin is increasingly acknowledged by both the international research community and policy and decision-makers.

According to Warnecke(2010) “various African states have established diaspora departments or ministries to further institutionalize state-diaspora relations. In the countries of residence, governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations are looking for ways to involve diaspora members within their developmental and integration endeavors” (ADPC, 2010, p4). Diaspora groups have become an important actors in development, peace and conflict processes in their countries of origin. In recent years, the Western world experienced the emergence of a clear representative communities in Europe. Diaspora, which is composed of extremely diversified groups from different parts of the African continent, were largely forced to immigrate due to the political unrest, dictatorships, civil wars and poverty that exist within their countries. With the examples of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan and Eretria, immigrants from these countries represent an important number of diaspora groups living in Europe.

Actually, migrants are believed to bring valuable contributions towards homeland peace building and development in various ways. Sinatti (2010) mentioned that, “Diaspora involved in peace building through direct political participation, for instance in nation-level peace conferences or electoral processes. Also, they can engage with the country of origin through civil society organizations that operate at the local, national and international levels. The latter provides an opportunity for diasporas groups to take part in the development and/or humanitarian activities such as health, education and relief services” (ADPC, 2010, p.10). Further, it is argued that diasporas’ activities (like social remittance and emergency relief) are not directly or explicitly related to peace building. Instead, diaspora should concentrate on peace building activities, like promoting peace education programs to the communities, establishing constructive dialogue processes that will ensure the reconciliation, stimulating the education of marginalized people, raising awareness in the field of human rights, conducting conflict research, organizing discussion events, and implementing peace and reconciliation projects at the local level.

The contributions of diaspora in peace building are convincing. The remittances, for example, sent back by diaspora to their communities are playing a significant role in shaping the living conditions of their communities. Warnecke (2010) emphasized that diaspora individuals and organizations can be critical agents who can provide significant contributions to peace building, conflict transformation and post-conflict reconstruction efforts in their country of origin, than any other external peace building actor (ADPC, 2010, p.9). This argument is based on the assumption that diaspora and their organizations have better familiarity with their country of origin. Therefore, combining their homeland knowledge and life experiences in a country of residence, will certainly put them into a unique position and enables them to perform effectively compared to other external peace building agencies. Clearly, engaging diaspora can be beneficial to both the diaspora and country of residence. It enhances the capacity of diaspora (financially and morally), and simultaneously help the country of residence to learn about diasporas’ peace building activities and acquire valuable information on their country of origin, which might be useful for country of residence in terms of initiating migration policies. Based on these considerations diaspora are seen as suitable partners in terms of peace building and development. However, the impact of diaspora engagement in peace building is sometimes contested among researchers. Besides the positive contribution of diaspora mentioned above, immigrant groups may also impact the peace building process negatively. Some researchers argued that the influence of diaspora groups on the situation in country of origin may serve to exacerbate conflicts through direct or indirect support for the conflict parties, particularly through the provision of financial or logistical resources, but also due to the (assumed) reproduction and continuity of conflict among the diaspora (Warnecke, 2010). Although the engagement of diaspora in peace building may generate important challenges for both diaspora organizations and third parties, nevertheless, excluding diaspora from taking part in the peace activities may undermine the peace building process in post-conflict countries.

### *Challenges to diaspora engagement*

Concerning the challenges to diaspora engagement, Sinatti (2010) presented a number of relevant factors that influences the participation of diaspora organizations. First of all, lack of accurate information on diaspora composition and activities is the first difficulty that third parties can encounter. The large fragmentation within diaspora means that only those groups that are well established, and engage in activities that are visible in the public domain are easy to identify and access (ADPC, 2010, 14). Clearly, fragmentation within the diaspora can be related to previous or ongoing conflicts in the country of origin which have spilled over into the diasporas’ country of residence, and thus might not only make it difficult for third parties to select suitable partner, but it may also hinder the possibilities for cooperation with country of residence institutions and country of origin development agencies.

In order to assess whether diaspora organizations are capable of constructive engagement in peace building, Sinatti (2010) suggested that “it is important for outsiders to recognize the heterogeneous nature of diaspora and to pay attention to the ways in which fragmentary lines are drawn within a given community on the basis of ethnicity, religion, gender, clan, profession and generation” (ADPC, 2010, p14). In other words, before selecting a diaspora organization as partner, third parties need to investigate and understand in advance the diversity and fragmentations within diaspora groups and the peace building activities that they are involved in.

Secondly, the organization and the practices of diaspora organization are regarded as an important challenge for diaspora engagement in peace building. As diaspora individuals engage voluntarily in peace building and development activities, the time that is dedicated to them is very limited seeing that they have to fulfill work and family priorities first. For instance, Sinatti (2010) found that most diaspora organizations are small in size and that they face the continuous challenge of having sufficient-time and financial resources to work efficiently, while members deal with daily personal difficulties in the country of residence such as unemployment, economic hardship, social and family problems (ADPC, 2010, p.15). Additionally, earning trustworthiness and legitimacy is regarded as one of the most difficult challenges for diaspora. In order to acquire financial and moral support from the country of residence officials, diaspora organizations need to prove that they are legitimate and accountable. In this context, it is argued that just been formally registered will not guarantee a financial support from the third parties. Instead, diaspora organizations must be able to show that they are credible and clean from a bad reputation, such as money misuse.

In addition, diaspora organizations may sometimes have difficulties to motivate and engage their members in peace building activities. This could be related to the fact that, some members have lost the hope of improving the situation in the country of origin due to corruption or a long existing conflict. Finally, Sinatti (2010) mentioned that “diaspora understandings of country of origins’ conflict and its local dynamics are another important factor that can challenge diaspora engagement” (ADPC, 2010, p.16). This means that before engaging in peace building activities, diaspora needs to understand the actual situation in the country of origin. Due to the long absence of diaspora from the country of origin, they may view and misinterpret the situation in the country of origin wrongly, and therefore, adopt unfeasible peace building or development activities.

### *Key criteria for constructive engagement*

Considering the conditions for a constructive engagement of diaspora in peace building, Sinatti (2010) emphasized that empowering diaspora groups will facilitate their participation as collaborative partners in peace building initiatives, and generate win-win situations for both host and home countries. Diaspora motivation and knowledge of country of origin, for instance, may represent valuable assets that could consolidate the efforts already undertaken in the field of peace building by the government and non-governmental actors (ADPC, 2010, p.17). In order to build an effective partnership between diaspora and other external actors, Sinatti (2010) suggest that migrant organizations must meet the basic requirements presented below, while on the other hand third parties should also be prepared to adapt their ways and standards and favor the establishment of mutual collaboration. These basic requirements include:

1. *Transparency within the diaspora organization*

This criterion relates to the organizational structure and modes of governance. This means that the organizations should be legally registered and have a formal structure where the frameworks for supervisory roles and oversight functions are established. Clearly, diaspora should be able to show that their organizations are operating with clear rules and procedures.

1. *Inclusiveness of the diaspora organizations*

This criterion means that diaspora organizations can only participate effectively if they are operating inclusively. Thirds parties mostly approaches only organizations that represent their whole community. Although this might not be always feasible for diasporas organizations due to conflicts within diaspora groups, diaspora organizations must prove that they are committed to represent all diaspora groups from the same country of origin, regardless their societal and cultural diversity.

1. *Accountability within the diaspora organizations*

Establishing trustworthiness and credibility is one of the most critical challenges for the engagement of diaspora organizations. For instance, lack of trust is recognized as one of the major causes of fragmentations and conflicts within diaspora communities, and credibility has become a critical selection criteria for third parties. In order to be able to acquire financial support or partnership with third parties, diaspora organizations need to demonstrate that they are credible. This could be done by operating formally and professionally, such as managing organization processes and providing audit and records reports. This means diaspora organizations will certainly need highly skilled volunteers to run and manage their organizations.

1. *Cooperation within the national and transnational context*

As diaspora organizations needs financial resources and expertise in order to conduct their peace building activities, cooperating with institutions in the country of residence become vital and indispensable. The cooperation will not merely help to empower diaspora. Instead, it will also facilitate and encourage organizations in the country of residence to actively engage in the peace building process. In addition, the cooperation between diaspora organizations (nationally and transnationally) represent an important critical aspect of diaspora engagement. In fact, it is argued that diaspora organizations are more likely to succeed in their interventions if they could operate transnationally. The transitional cooperation of diaspora organization will eventually generate certain advantages for the diaspora, such as sharing knowledge and experiences, ability to cut across internal divisions and contrasts, having the possibility to mobilize financial recourses and acquire professional skills effectively, and enhancing the social cohesiveness among diasporas groups.

1. *The diaspora engagement strategies*

Before diaspora engage in peace building activities in the country of origin, it is important that they first investigate and understand the main course of the conflict in the country of origin. Consequently, the principal objective of the organization must be relevant for peace, reconciliation or community building. Doing so will, surely, enlarge their chances to be selected as a partner with residence organizations.

1. *Continuity and sustainability of the diaspora organizations*

Continuity and sustainability of diaspora organizations are also an important challenges for diaspora organizations. Basically, due to shortage of highly skilled personals, diaspora organizations often lack the ability to translate their aims into concrete interventions. In terms of selecting the diaspora as partner organization, third parties firstly assesses the sustainability of the organization base on its implemented and achieved interventions. Thus in order to be selected as partners, diaspora organization must show that they are sustainable (ADPC, 2010, p.19).

In conclusion, due to its contribution in peace building and ties with the country of origin, diaspora organizations are regarded as suitable partners in terms of conducting peace building and development activities. In fact, engaging diaspora in peace building is often associated with certain challenges that can hinder cooperation with third parties. In order to be able to build a constructive partnership, migrant organizations need to overcome the challenges and meet the basic requirements outlined above. On the other hand, third parties could concentrate on selecting and empowering qualified diaspora organizations for partnership. Clearly, the set of criteria illustrated above aims at strengthening the capacity of diaspora organizations and facilitating the selection of diaspora organization with which third parties might wish to engage in conducting activities in the country of origin.

It should be noted that not all suggested criteria may be relevant for all diaspora organizations. For example, transparency and accountability (criteria a and c), could particularly take into account in the case of organizations that engage politically or that are organized along ethnic lines. Likewise, the criterion of inclusiveness (b) should not be weighed in the case of a women's organization, seeing that women's organizations are often issue oriented and present a non-inclusive nature by definition. Based on these considerations, it is important that third parties analyze the criteria listed thoroughly and adapt them to each case with particular care.

# Methods of operation of NGOs in peace building

The amount and types of NGOs engaging in peace building are enormous. The practices of NGOs relies on their level of co-operation and orientation. This section contains a short review of NGOs types and its functions. Additionally, the practices of three NGOs that based in the Netherlands were broadly discussed, one through face to face interview and the rest through consulting literature. The aim is to provide a genuine overview of NGOs operations in peace building. For instance, the three examples of NGOs covered could be an example or potential partners with the Liberian diaspora in the Netherlands in terms of building their capacity and participate in peace-building effectively.

A Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs), is defined as a civil society organization or as any other names like independent sector, social movement organization, private voluntary organization, volunteer sector, self-help organization, and non-state actors (Uzuegbunam, 2012). NGOs that are created by natural or legal persons are playing a significant role in peace building process. They are even conducting more peace building activities than any other official, governmental agencies. The types and levels of NGOs existing nowadays varies. According to Uzuebunam (2012), “Types of NGOs are discernable on the basis of their orientation and co-operation” (p. 209). This means that NGOs are recognized by their level of co-operation and orientation. For example, an NGO can be charitable, service, participation, and or empowering oriented. While at the same time, co-operating in the community-based, city wide based, national based, and or international based level. NGOs are often defined as operational and advocacy organizations. As operational organizations concentrate on the design and implementation of development related projects, advocacy NGOs focuses on defense and promotion of specific courses, like raising awareness, acceptance, and knowledge through lobbying, activist events, and presswork.

In addition, methods of operation of NGOs differ from organization to organization. For example, NGOs that strives for poverty alleviation, usually provide the local people the equipment and skills they need to find clean drinking water and food, and those who concerned with human rights abuse concentrates on providing legal assistance to victims of human rights abuse. They practices through investigation and documentation of human rights violations. To ensure viability and effectiveness within their operations, all NGOs adopt public relations attitude, consulting power and project management, entrepreneurship and techniques. In fact, NGOs play an important role in peace building, and it is considered irrational to undermine the contribution and place of NGOs in peace building in the society. As Uzuebunam (2012) argued, “peace building operations like disarming, repatriating refugees, building a consensus for peace and moderating local political leaders are very important in building peace, and it requires deep access into local environments and grassroots processes rather than top-down approaches” (p.211).

Seeing that NGOs mainly focuses on conducting humanitarian, developmental, human rights and conflict resolution activities, they are likely to be the most suitable actors in conflict resolution. For instance, in recent years, NGOs in Nigeria like peace Christian unions, Christian women groups played a significant role in solving the internal religious conflicts within the states of Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Plateau and Enugu (Uzuegbunam, 2012). During their workshops and seminars on peace building, they tried to engage in the problem solving and foster reconciliation through apology, prayer, and forgiveness, while other organizations worked for mutual understanding and prejudice reduction. Through these approaches, they succeeded in developing joint projects and building confidence activities which involve opponents at the grass roots level. These strategies encouraged and increased the contact and cooperation between people on all side of the conflict.

### *African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC)*

Besides poverty alleviation and reporting human right abuse, certain NGOs concentrate on empowerment and capacity building of local NGOs and diaspora organizations. The African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC), is an example of organizations that are busy with empowering the African diaspora. This NGO is located in The Hague and is created in 2006 by the diaspora in Europe. The principal objective of the organization is to “spur and galvanize the contribution of the African diaspora towards the social and economic development of the continent in a more structured, sustainable and systematic manner” (ADPC, 2014). Since 2006, the organization has been supporting African diaspora in Europe to get connected with the African continent in a collective form, using their resources (capital, knowledge, and networks) and undertake initiatives to realize development and positive social change in Africa. In order to stimulate the participation of African diaspora in peace building or socio-economic development of Africa, the ADPC set each year various constructive projects on different themes to build capacities of the African diaspora as well as the policy makers in Africa. Below is an overview of important projects that ADPC introduced in recent years.

*Strengthening Emerging Diaspora Ministries in Africa (SEDIMA) project.*

This project was launched in 2009 by ADPC the aim to build the capacity of diaspora ministries of African governments that are responsible for overseeing the engagement of diaspora in development related matters. More specifically, the main objective of SEDIMA project is to enhance the capacity of African policy makers that are assigned with migration management, integration, migration and development, by providing them the necessary skills and tools so that they will be able to develop the feasible policies that could maximize the contribution of the diaspora to the development of Africa. The capacity building program comprises three different activities:

* Capacity building training workshops tailored to specific policy making needs of emerging Diaspora-oriented governments institutions;
* Direct Technical Assistance (TA) in form of consultancy, coaching and mentoring and;
* E-learning program on migration and Development, which is an online learning course that provides access to up-to-date knowledge in the field (ADPC, 2014, p.6).

*The Migration and Development Civil Society Network project.*

The MADE was launched in 2014 and set to help worldwide migrants and civil societies to connect together, learn from each other, influence policies and improve the wellbeing of migrants and their communities. The project was coordinated by the International Catholic Migration Commission (IMC), and was organized in three levels: Globally, regionally (Africa, Asia, and Americas) and thematically. The initiative was very useful as it worked towards building a global civil society network, and strengthening the global movement of civil society organizations that advocate for the protection of migrants rights. On the global level, the civil society working groups mainly focused on the themes of diaspora and migrants for development, global governance of migration and development, and labor migration & recruitment (ADPC, 2014, p.6).

*Diaspora academy project*

The diaspora academy project is another important project that was developed in 2014 by ADPC in cooperation with The Hague Academy for local governance (THA) and the Network University (TNU). The main goal of this program was to strengthen the professional skills and competencies of diaspora organizations, organized professional associations, groups and individuals in Europe that are willing to engage in the development of their country of origin. The primary task of the program consists of organizing workshops on capacity building trainings. The program was exclusively intended to diaspora organizations and professionals that are active in peace building, conflict resolution, social development, post-conflict construction, advocacy, lobby, network building and smart development partnership between diaspora and homeland development organizations (ADPC, 2014, p.7).

### *Centre of Collective Learning and Action (CCoLA)*

Moreover, in order to acquire a practical knowledge of the operations of NGOs, a face to face interview was conducted with the co-founder and director of CCoLA (Mr. Joseph C). CCoLA is a non- governmental organization founded in 2013 by a group of African diaspora living in the Netherlands. Its main objective is to strengthen communities, mobilize talented African diaspora and encourage their cooperation towards achieving common peace building and development goals in country of origin. As he mentioned, “what we try to do is to build communities, strengthening communities, strengthening collective the capacity to work together…… providing communities the possibilities and tools to achieve their common goals, who commit themselves already to work together” (Joseph, 2017).

CCoLA operates through the organization of thematic consultation meetings, workshops, and training for diaspora organizations or individuals that are willing to improve their professional skills. In other words, it organizes training, workshops and consultation meetings for diaspora professionals that are active in different fields of peace building, and are willing to improve their professional skills. The organization operates thematically, which means capacity building training is exclusively provided to people that are active in different peace building or development fields. These may include humanitarian disaster, social cohesion, organizational development, health care and waste management. For example, during the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, the organization played a significant role in organizing communities and diaspora organizations (that are active in humanitarian disaster) and educating them how to intervene or handle the Ebola crisis, raising awareness and lobbying. Additionally, the respondent mentioned that health care is another important area where CCoLA is operating. For instance, recently the organization created a community of medical practices of Guinean professionals in Guinea (Conakry), the aim to improve their professional skills and health care system in Guinea. The project was very constructive and successful, as it mobilized many doctors and helped them to enhance their knowledge.

Furthermore, it appear that CCoLA is usually funded by the municipalities and Dutch government, and has a strong partnership with Dutch NGOs (like African Study Centre, MFS, Max van de Stoel Foundation) which provide the organization the experts on themes that it is dealing with, or work with them to develop and execute peace building projects. In relation with the cooperation of the African diaspora, it turns out that not all African diaspora organizations are cooperating with CCoLA or benefiting from their services. Noteworthy, the interview revealed that the Liberian diaspora organizations are among those that are not working with CCoLA, and also less organized in comparing to Sierra Leonean diaspora in the Netherlands.

In order to encourage the diasporas and establish a sustainable partnership, CCoLA usually organizes consultation meetings and open discussions between African immigrants. Here, the respondent mentioned that the reason why CCoLA was created is to mobilize and stimulate the collaboration between African diaspora in the Netherlands. In his words “the reason that I created CCoLA was that I saw that there is a need to have a kind of organizations playing, facilitating the role of organizing things, bringing people together and organizing things……Unfortunately, we can't stop the disaster, but we can at least organize ourselves to intervene during a disaster" (Joseph, 2017). As mobilizing and engaging the diaspora in peace building activities is an important challenge for CCoLA, other factors like gaining recognition, funds raising and government restrictions are also viewed as relevant obstacles that are influencing its functioning and activities. For instance, the interviewee emphasized that sometimes it is hard for CCoLA to gain trust and convince donors to sponsor its projects as donor organizations demand high criteria.

### *Civil Society for Peace building and State building (CSPPS)*

In addition, the Civil Society Platform for Peace building and State building (CSPPS) is another relevant NGO that is supporting the role of Civil Society organizations in peace building and state building in conflict affected states. Besides delivering humanitarian and emergency relief, CSPPS provides support towards Civil Societies to strengthen their participation in the international dialogue on peace building and state building. The CSPPS is the South-North non-governmental coalition of peace building organizations that coordinates and supports Civil Society participation in the international dialogue on peace building and state building. The platform is located in the Netherlands and is sponsored by Cordaid, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (SDC) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It gathers representatives from more than twenty-five countries. The main objectives of the organization are to “develop and strengthen the voice and capacity of civil society at national and global levels to effectively engage in, and influence, the international dialogue on Peace building and state building as a critical contribution to crisis prevention and sustainable peace and development for all” (CSPPS, 2015, p.8).

Basically, the activities of CSPPS are based on the following three strategies:

* “Shaping and infusing the international dialogue on peace building and state building, Sustainable Development Goals and humanitarian processes with peace building values;
* Strengthening and broadening Civil Society engagement in peace building, state-building and crisis prevention;
* Influencing prevention, peace building and state-building and development at all level” (CSPPS, 2015, p.8).

More specifically, CSPPS provides support to CSPPS Country Team in participation in official New Deal Processes (also known as the New Sustainable Peace building and Development Goals), and to the drafting and dissemination of reporting documents on progress and challenges of peace building at country level, through the provision of financial resources, technical and expert support. In addition, it provides further support to the mobilization, strengthening and capacity building of national coalitions and country teams. On the other hand, the CSPPS country team strives for the engagement of local civil society in the international dialogue on peace building, so that the voice, interests and concerns of societies in affected countries could be heard in the New Deal processes, also known as Sustainable Development Goals (set by ministers and leaders from over thirty countries, heads of international institutions, civil society organizations, and private sector organizations), and to ensure the participation of civil society in peace building and development becomes legitimate, and facilitate the implementation of sustainable development goals (CSPPS, 2015). Key priorities here are to enable local civil society to be a full independent member and partner in implementing the new sustainable development goals, securing necessary political space and access to dialogue.

Thanks to the effort of CSPPS, multiple peace building projects were achieved by the local civil societies in Africa. For example, during the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, the CSPPS helped the local civil societies in Sierra Leone (through offering financial resources, expertise, training, and coordination) to engage, and manage the Ebola crisis effectively. The Sierra Leonean CSOs played a critical role in promoting social mobilization in communities on all the Ebola emergency response related issues. They took the lead in raising the awareness (through community meetings, radio and TV discussions, focus group discussions, door to door notification and messaging through SMS and WhatsApp) of the public nationwide on the dangers and risks involved in the Ebola response in all facets of society ranging from community, village, town, section, chiefdom, district, regional and national levels (CSPPS, 2015).

In addition, besides the distribution of food and non-food items in Ebola affected communities and quarantine homes, CSOs practiced many other important activities that influenced the struggle against Ebola positively: These include working regularly alongside government to promote and strengthen compliance and adherence with the Community bye-laws and the sanctions placed on the health emergency, imposed by the government of Sierra Leone; serving as checks and balances for everybody in the country; conducting training workshops; holding seminars and symposium as means of capacity building of health workers; advocating for the inclusion of 3,500 community health workers who were trained by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation; monitoring the Ebola response interventions and operations including the use of public and services delivery; and monitoring all lock-down periods, introduced by the government to fish out those Ebola affected persons in hiding; and raise awareness of the public on the need to maintain law and order, especially in respecting and adhering to the policies laid down on the public health state of emergency (CSPPS, 2015).

In relation with ensuring political space and inclusivity of CSOs, the CSPPS support CSOs at country level entails safeguarding space and voice for Civil Society to influence policies at a local and global level in New Deal processes. For instance, in 2015, the CSPPS supported Civil Society in Somalia to bring their voices to the international arena. Here, CSPPS succeeded in mobilizing CSOs from all the Somalia regions, through organizing forums and consultative meetings. Due to these events, CSOs were able to come together and wrote a collective communiqué to the EU, unfolding their political situation and economic issues. As a result, the EU granted 8 million Euros to the CSOs in Somalia (CSPPS, 2015). Finally, the CSPPS also played an important role in the campaign against Ebola in Guinea. During the Ebola crisis the platform technically and financially supported a research entitled ‘The Ebola impact on peace building and state-building and on the economic life in Guinea’, this was initiated by ODDI-Guinea following the difficulties Ebola brought to the country (CSPPS, 2015).

Next, to that, they provided support to a second project called ‘Nutritional, school and clothing support to Ebola-made orphans in the regions of Boke and Boffa’. The project aimed to support Ebola victims in these regions, seeing that they were the most affected places by Ebola. The brief introduction of NGOs operations presented above, indicates that there are many possible ways for NGOs to participate in peace building. For example, An NGO can engage in local, national or international level through advocacy, lobby, and empowerment or as an operational organization. The three examples of NGOs operation methods discussed are intended as a guide on the basis of whom Liberian diaspora organizations can identify effective operations methods and potential peace building partners, so that they will be able to improve their peace building strategies and or professional skills.

# Dutch initiatives in engaging the Diaspora in peace building

As many types of researches highlighted, migrants are increasingly regarded as potential promoters of development in their countries of origin. The strong commitment of the diaspora to help their countries of origin translate to their organization in residence country and the transfers of financial, as well as social, cultural and human capital. Therefore, empowering and creating a partnership with diaspora would help peace building actors to implement peace building operations, and establish a sustainable peace. The following pages offer an overview of policies and programs which the Dutch government has initiated in the past decades to engage diaspora in peace building. These programs target all formal diaspora organizations in the Netherlands including the Liberian diaspora organizations. Clearly, this chapter briefly outlined the Dutch co-financing system and the role of other Dutch NGOs in the empowerment of diaspora.

The Netherlands is a well-organized country and is one of the leading actors in promoting peace and development. Its effort to empower and engage diaspora in peace building reflect far backward in the 1970s when the Dutch government started to implement policies and programs which will support immigrants wishing to return to their countries of origin, and contribute with their skills and resources to build their country. However, over the years and through the publication of three policy Memoranda on migration-development (in 1996, 2004, and 2008), the vision of the Dutch government regarding diaspora empowerment shifted from a strong interest for return migration to a broader and more inclusive understanding of the relation between migration and development (Ezatti, Sinatti, &Warnecke, 2010, p.18). For example, one of the policy priorities of the 2008 memorandum was to strengthen the involvement of migrant organizations in the development of international cooperation and development-policy process and to engage them directly as development actors.

The memorandum emphasized that engaging diaspora into the development dialogue, is an important condition for the effective planning and coherent implementation of development and peace building activities in the country of origin because migrants have useful networks, and are often better acquainted with legislation in their country of origin. In order to integrate diaspora in peace building and development dialogue, the Division of Consular Affairs and Migration (DCM) promotes a yearly consultation that is open to the participation of all diaspora organizations. Here, diaspora groups are regularly invited to take part in consultation meetings and workshops, whereby their role as development partners and the definition of policies towards their countries of origin and in the international arena are discussed (Ezatti, Sinatti, &Warnecke, 2010). Besides offering dialogue opportunities through consultation, the Dutch government supports an active role of diaspora in development in a number of additional ways. For instance, the government is committed to strengthen the capacity and the organization of diaspora through the provision of financial support. As mentioned in the 2008 policy Memorandum, “The government would like migrant organizations to set up their own umbrella organization, or a similar construction [….]. It is prepared to offer them assistance in doing so, perhaps by providing an initial grant” (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008, p.55). Next to that, the Dutch government is willing to provide funds to suitably qualified diaspora organizations. In this sense, few diaspora organizations could receive a direct funding from the Dutch government, while the majority may receive funds indirectly through the Dutch system of co-financing organizations.

### *7.1.Co-financing Agencies and Links*

In the Netherlands, many development cooperation activities are not carried out directly by the government, instead, it is carried out by the co-financing agencies (consists of a small number of Dutch development NGOs). Traditionally, the most prominent of these NGOs are known as the Oxfam Novib (CFAs), Cordaid (Catholic), ICCO (Protestant) and Hivos (Humanist). The co-financing agencies are funded by the Dutch government, and its main objective is to oversee the government development channel. According to the ministry of development and cooperation, between 2011 and 2015, 67 Dutch development organizations were awarded about € 1.9 billion through the co- financing system. As a result, the funds enabled these organizations to work with 4,000 partner organizations in developing countries and provide support to 100.000 local initiatives approximately (Government of the Netherlands, n.d).

In fact, the co-financing system offers diaspora organizations alongside other Netherlands-based civil society organizations the possibility to acquire funding for their own projects. The organizations could directly approach the co-financing organizations for funding through their front offices that deal with requests for support and funding. In order to facilitate this contact, the co-financing organizations together with the NCDO foundation and COS Nederland established the Linkis platform in 2004. Linkis is a digital information window where the co-financing agencies cooperate and provides advices and supports to organizations that are searching for information or funds for their initiatives in the peace building and development field (Ezatti, Sinatti, &Warnecke, 2010, p.19). However, despite the above funding opportunity for diaspora to engage directly in development and peace building, certain factors could hinder organizations from accessing the funds. For example, the Dutch Government establishes a list of partner countries that are eligible for development assistance. The exclusion of certain countries (like Liberia and Guinea) from the list makes it more difficult for diaspora members of these countries to access public funds for development purpose in their countries of origin. Nevertheless, the diaspora organizations can be partly compensated by the co-financing agencies (CFAs) and other NGOs, who also have their own lists of priority countries and are committed to help those that are not covered by the Dutch government.

### *7.2.Diaspora empowerment*

Besides facilitating access to project funding through Linkis, various external actors in the Netherlands have been doing efforts to empower the diaspora. For instance, some co-financing agencies like Cordaid and Oxfam Novib had a longstanding collaboration with migrants organizations that dates back to the 1980s and 1990s, and are making efforts to enhance the capacity of diaspora networks through funds and capacity building training (Ezatti, Sinatti, &Warnecke, 2010, p.20). In addition, besides the consultation processes promoted directly by the Dutch government described above, various actors are also involving diaspora in peace building activities through consultation meetings. For example, in the past decades, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC), UNOY and CCoLA have been playing a significant role in the empowerment of diaspora organizations. They strive to reinforce diaspora through strengthening or favoring the establishment of diaspora networks and platforms, promoting migrant lobby and advocacy, and providing capacity building training to diaspora individuals and organizations.

These organizations usually organizes meetings, capacity building training, public debates and expert gatherings with the aim of strengthening diaspora professional skills, and actively involving them in peace initiatives in their country of origin. In particular, the IOM within its Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) program (that ended in 2008), succeeded to establish a working relationship with diaspora individuals and organizations. During the program, “the IOM relied on the assistance of Ethiopian actors to spread information about the project among individual Ethiopians interested in returning to their country of origin for a limited period to contribute to local development” (Ezatti, Sinatti, &Warnecke, 2010, p.21).

On the other hand, Ezatti, Sinatti, &Warnecke, (2010) stated that , the existence of many small diaspora organizations has been a source of frustration for many Dutch actors, as they called for more unifying umbrella organizations with a clear representatives (p.20). In response to this, diaspora groups have become increasingly aware of the value of working together, and thus certain different diaspora groups have been able to establish a number of diaspora network organizations. These organizations are mostly set by diaspora groups of one nationality (such as NedSOM Somali diasporas, LAH Liberian diasporas, MUH Guinean diasporas and SL Central Union Sierra Leonean diasporas) or by a multi-national group that is committed to a peace-related issue (like the Multicultural Women Peacemakers Network).

All in all, although the Dutch government offers various possibilities for diaspora to contribute to peace building, it is still difficult for diaspora organizations in the Netherlands to access resources and funding for large-scale projects. Government restrictions on migration and development cooperation, language issues, lack of sufficient knowledge about the Dutch development co-financing system, and lack of organizational experience of diaspora groups, are generating substantial challenges for the participations of diaspora in peace building.

The co-financing system (initiated by the Dutch government) is regarded as a relevant obstacle for diaspora engagement. Ezatti, Sinatti, &Warnecke, (2010) argued that, “recent researches observed that Dutch aid agencies are considering diaspora as ‘resources’ or ‘tools’ for the development of their countries of origin and not as genuine partners (p.33). Aid agencies mainly offer its financial support for training and coaching purpose, instead of fostering the participation of diaspora in the activities of mainstream aid organizations. Nevertheless, diaspora NGOs that are well organized may be able to access funds through the co-financing agencies, and or acquire professional skills through other multiple Dutch and not Dutch NGOs, if they can prove accountability and develop projects proposals properly.

# Liberian diasporas organizations in the Netherlands

In the past decades, Liberia was affected by numerous longstanding and extensive conflicts with serious humanitarian, socio-economic and political consequences for the entire nation. The two Liberian civil wars (1989-1996 & 1999-2003) which are regarded as one of the bloodiest in Africa, claimed the lives of more than 250.000 civilians, and further displaced millions of people (Fickling, 2006). Apparently, the flow of Liberian immigrant into the Netherlands dates back to the 1990s and 1999 when the Liberians tried to flee the conflicts in their country. As from 1990, the Liberian diaspora started to mobilize themselves and form local organizations. The main objectives are to empower Liberians in the Netherlands by assisting them with integration, social problems, education, and / or by providing judicial aid.

In addition, the organizations strives to promote a positive image of Liberia, stimulate the development of Liberia, create awareness about issues in the field of freedom and human rights, promote friendship between Dutch and Liberians, and to encourage fraternization and reconciliation among Liberians. The following section concentrates on describing and analyzing Liberian Diasporas activities and modes of engagement towards peace and stability in the country of origin. In this regard, the empirical study addresses a sub-set of research questions:

1. What types of diaspora organizations from Liberia can be found in the Netherlands?
2. How do these organizations seek to contribute to peace and development in their country of origin?
3. Which factors shape, enable and delimit their engagement, both ‘here ‘and there’?

### *8.1.Typology of associations: structures, scopes, and membership*

As mentioned above, the Liberian diaspora in the Netherlands is a long standing community. Its associations which are composed of people who mainly arrived in the Netherlands before 2000, generally focuses on reconciliation of Liberians and the development of Liberia. Liberian migrants’ associations in the Netherlands vary in their degree of formalization. There are, for instance, formalized and registered associations (non-profit) with the registered statute that established the positions of the board members, its mission and code of conduct, un-registered but formalized groups (such as cultural associations) and informal associations. Clearly, the formation of the associations is based on collective or individual initiatives. There are groups registered as associations (*Vereniging*) and those that are registered as foundations (*stichtingen*). While some of these associations have a membership that includes officials, those operating as a *stichting* do not have members, with the exception of a board that oversees its operations.

According to the president of Liberian Association Holland (LAH) “there could be approximately 3000 officially registered Liberian immigrants in the Netherlands” (Harmon, 2017). Though, it was impossible to confirm this assumption because members of the associations are not permanent as they are constantly moving to other European countries due to social and political issues. Some are even migrating back to the country of origin voluntarily to re-establish and invest there. Seeing that Liberian diaspora are living dispersed throughout the Netherlands, their associations is located in many states, especially in the big cities such as Utrecht, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag, Eindhoven, and Enschede.

In the past decades, Liberian diasporas organizations have been able to establish themselves and function within the Netherlands due to the legislative and institutional frameworks that facilitate such initiatives. For instance, the opportunity to register with the Dutch chamber of commerce either as a foundation or an association has enabled some groups and organizations to engage formally with the state through various ministries and local authorities as well as with major Dutch development agencies. This relationship has been critical in securing the necessary funding for diaspora activities and engagement in peace building in the country of origin.

Lack of information on all Liberian Diasporas organizations made it impossible to expose the exact amount of Liberian organizations existing in the Netherlands. The visibility and accessing information on the organizations was very difficult as they often operate informally. Further, by assessing the scopes and membership criteria of the organizations, it appeared that most of the associations are community or ethnic oriented. This means that membership in the associations is based on belonging to a certain tribe, religion or nationality. As the coordinator of Bengoma emphasized “ besides the main purpose, we also tried to involve some other new things within the organization. That means everybody that are Madingo from West Africa , he don’t have to be from Liberia, if you can speak Madingo you can join this organization” (Koroma, 2017). While some are larger ( with more than 100 members) than others, the average of members lies to 60 members.

Concerning the association’s income, membership fees and benefit events, such as dinners and parties, are identified as the common ways of raising funds. For more professionalized associations, developing projects proposals and seeking financial support from the local council and or Dutch co-financing agencies are an additional strategies of acquiring funds. In terms of organizational and management structures, the respondents indicates that most of the diaspora associations do not have official and permanent headquarters. As a result, meetings are held informally in the home of one of the members or in the community center often offered by the municipality for a temporary use. In short, for the purpose of this study, the Liberian Association Holland (LAH) and Bengoma association were selected as case studies seeing that it coordinates all diaspora associations, and Bengoma represent the largest group of Liberian diaspora.

*8.2.Liberian Association Holland (LAH)*

Considering the Liberian Association Holland, it turn out, for example that the umbrella association was initiated in 2003 by a number of Liberian local organizations, and its main objective is to unite and coordinate the Liberian diasporas organizations based in the Netherlands, represent the Liberian community in the international level, reconcile them, promote peace and solidarity among them, support the integration of diaspora in host country, and stimulate the peace and development process in country of origin through participation and lobby. As the president of LAH emphasized, "Uniting getting the Liberians together first number one, and seeking each other welfare and helping our people back home, that is the main purpose of the organization……... we oversee everything, if there is a problem, even in their organization, the mother organization intervene, because sometimes you have misunderstanding” (Harmon, 2017). More specifically, the role of the LAH is to bring the Liberian diaspora together and coordinate the contemporary Liberian organizations in the Netherlands. In the past, the mother organization has played an important role in mobilizing the Liberian diaspora and representing all sister organizations in the international context.

### *Bengoma Association*

Moreover, the Bengoma association is an example of Liberian sister organizations that are purely ethnic oriented. The organization was created in 1998 by the Liberian Mandingo tribe in the Netherland and is committed to uniting all Mandingo from West Africa living in the Netherland and Europe as well. As the coordinator of Bengoma mentioned, “Bengoma was founded for our brothers here in Europe to unite them. Keep our culture alive, and also make sure that our tradition and religion everywhere we take it with us” (Koroma, 2017). In this context, the association aims at uniting the Mandingo tribe to safeguard their culture and religion. Although the Bengoma association is under LAH (the umbrella association), it remains autonomous and conducts its own projects independently. According to the respondents, the members of the association counts more than 800 people and exclusively consist of Mandingo Muslims.

Besides the relationship between Liberian groups in the Netherlands, the Liberian diaspora generally have transnational links. Some of the groups have links with its ethnic or religious backgrounds outside the Netherlands, in the EU as well as in North American continent. Both organizations investigated recognized that the transnational interactions are very important, as it helps to mobilize diaspora and works together towards peace building and community development in country of origin. In this regard, the Liberian diaspora organizes every year a diaspora conference in one of the EU countries. The event takes three days and aims to mobilize all Liberians living in Europe to enlarge their networks and discuss the development of Liberia.

### *The role of Liberian diaspora in peace building in the country of origin*

During this investigation, it appears that the Bengoma organization, as well as the Liberian Association Holland (LAH), are participating directly and indirectly to peace building in the country of origin through different forms of social, economic, and political development activities. For instance, in terms of social development, the interviews reveals that Bengoma and the LAH are implementing considerable projects that stimulate the education process in Liberia. The scholarship fund project is identified as one of the most important and successful projects initiated by the two organizations. In recent years, both organizations collectively developed the project called ‘scholarship fund’. The coordinator of Bengoma elaborated that the main objective of this project is to sponsor high school and university students in Liberia, particularly students that can't afford paying their school fees or going abroad to continue their education (Koroma, 2017) . The project is very successful as it benefits students from every part of the country. In addition, during the Ebola crisis in Liberia, the two organizations played an important role in combating the diseases. Beside mobilizing their community and raising awareness, significant health equipment (Like ambulances, beds, and medicines) and financial resources were donated (through the Liberian Red Cross) to Ebola victims by the Liberian diaspora organizations in the Netherlands (Harmon, 2017). In fact, the contributions of Liberian diaspora in the development and peace building process in the country of origin are very significant. The associations frequently conducts other substantial social development projects such as building bridges and public toilets, digging wells, reconstructing schools and hospitals, and providing medical and financial support to sick people.

Moreover, considering the engagement of the diaspora in the peace building process, the study reveals that the activities of the associations primarily focuses on mobilizing the diaspora, promoting peace and reconciling the Liberian people both in the country of residence and country of origin. In the country of residence, for instance, the respondent mentioned that the organizations organizes public meetings, peace conferences and sports events for the Liberian diaspora, and encourage them to forgive each other and live together in peace (Harmon, 2017). Here, he emphasized that the social media and literature aspects are playing an important role, as organizations try to influence the peoples’ behavior by writing books, spreading leaflets and information through social media. In his words, “So we are trying now to tell the people to wash away that thinking that you don't have to kill your brother if he doesn't belong to you…… We always ask for forgiveness, when we came to Holland, we are well integrated into the Dutch society, and they told us to co-exist…..We try to explain that by writing some books, and some little leaflets” (Harmon, 2017).

On the other hand, the organizations are also making efforts to reconcile it citizens in the country of origin in various ways. The associations often encourage and sponsor the organization of peace conferences between conflicting tribes in local communities. According to the respondent, guest houses are established in various part of the country to receive people from opponent tribes (Harmon, 2017). In other words, the guest houses are virtually offered to guests people from other states so that they can live there free of charge for a certain period. This strategy is considered very constructive, and aims at creating harmony among the quarreling parties and encourages them to travel and reside in each other states.

In addition, it is found that the Liberian diaspora have been influencing the peace building process in the country of origin through lobbying in the country of residence as well as in the country of origin. For instance, the coordinator of Bengoma argued that in terms of prosecuting the war criminals, such as former Liberian president Charles Taylor and his allies, the diaspora played an active role through lobbying to the International Criminal Court and the international community (Koroma, 2017). The diaspora attempted to influence the prosecution process by organizing conferences, seminars and other events to raise awareness, advocate for the prosecution of war criminals, organizing peaceful demonstrations, lobbying governments and international organizations, and providing useful information to the International Criminal Court which was relevant for the prosecution process.

### *Challenges to the Liberian diasporas organization*

When trying to assess the actual and potential scope for constructive diaspora intervention in peace building and development in Liberia, there are several factors that either restrict or enable this transnational engagement. The following paragraphs briefly summarize the most important findings.

Within the country of origin, the relationship between Liberian government authorities and many diaspora groups is characterized by mutual skepticism and distrust. According to the coordinator of Bengoma association, the Liberian government sometimes worried that certain diaspora groups are likely to support opposition movements, parties or organizing rebel groups to go back and fight the government. Consequently, these diaspora groups do not expect any support from the Liberian government authorities, and their engagement in Liberia is at times impeded by restrictions. Also, the fear to be perceived as rebel groups, is hindering the diaspora associations to conduct peace building projects in the country of origin effectively (Koroma, 2017). In view of restrictive government policies and government perception on diaspora as agents of conflicts, many organizations are anxious and work with individual contacts in Liberia, i.e. friends, relatives and other non-formalized groups. Net to that, the interviewee emphasized that lack of communication infrastructure and the unstable security situation in Liberia hampering the co-operation between diaspora organizations and their local partners, and the implementation of peace building projects (Koroma, 2017).

Concerning the obstacles of diaspora in the country of settlement, financial constraints are identified as an important hindrance to diaspora engagement in the Netherlands. All respondents argued that, most diaspora groups depend on membership fees and donations. Due to high requirements set by the Dutch government and other co-financing agencies, Liberian associations have been rarely able to receive financial support from Dutch institutions. Mostly, precarious residence titles, insufficient language skills and lack of job opportunities as well as discrimination against Africans, further delimit the diasporas’ participation and its skills to develop project proposals for acquiring funds. In addition, there are various diaspora characteristics that genuinely obstruct constructive and sustainable engagement of the diaspora. For example, the investigation reveals that the Liberian diaspora are very heterogeneous and highly fragmented along ideological, ethnic, religious and social lines. This fragmentation is accompanied by suspicion and distrust between various diaspora groups, including groups that share the same ethnic identity.

Although many groups are worried and have expressed the need for better co-operation among diaspora itself, tribalism and discrimination still exist between the diaspora and is considered as the agent of diaspora fragmentation. As mentioned by the president of LAH, “we always have some fighting during elections, some people go to an election and they are not satisfied, and tribalism is still going on” (Harmon, 2017). In fact, fragmentation within the diaspora is recognized as the major obstacle of Liberian community in the Netherlands. More specifically, tribalism (that spilled over from the country of origin) is jeopardizing the relationship between diaspora associations and also the existence of the umbrella organization (LAH). Seeing that the leadership of the mother organization (LAH) is represented by members of certain sister Liberian organizations, the conquest between the associations to rule the mother organization is very high. Those organizations that are not represented within the mother organization feels that they are marginalized, and therefore, chooses to stay away from other associations.

Another peace building constraint to diaspora engagement results from the high degree of dynamic change and fluctuation within the diaspora community. For instance, the chair of LAH argued that lack of job opportunities and precarious residence titles has obliged many Liberians in the Netherlands to move to other European or North American countries. As a result, the organizations are missing the necessary manpower as well as the financial contributions they could receive from migrants (Harmon, 2017). On the other hand, job priorities and family matters also make it difficult for the associations to motivate the existing members to participate in their activities. This is because people are busy with fulfilling work and family priorities, and has less time for voluntary work.

During the investigations, it is also observed that the participation of the diaspora might not be influenced just by the elements mentioned above. A relevant remark is that the Liberian diaspora organizations do not have a strong partnership with Dutch development agencies and or other diasporas organizations, while working closely with Dutch development agencies could increase their capacity to undertake activities both in the host country and country of origin. As mentioned in chapter 5, cooperation within the national and transnational context is an important criteria for an effective participation of diaspora organizations. Therefore, in order to increase their effectiveness, diaspora groups need to work very closely with development and peacebuilding institutions in host country.

In short, beside the positive contribution of diaspora groups, it is observed that the participation of Liberian diaspora groups is not effective, and it doesn’t meet the basic requirements presented in chapter 5 for diaspora constructive engagement. Although organizations are legally registered, there are lack of transparency and accountability within the organizations. This is because they are not operating formally and professionally. Organizations’ activities are mostly not well managed or reported. While reporting and or professionalizing their activities could help them to demonstrate trustworthiness and credibility. Secondly, the fragmentation within the Liberian diaspora make it difficult for the associations to operates inclusively. Due to the ongoing internal conflicts between Liberian diaspora, most associations are ethnic or religious oriented, and thus only represent few diaspora groups.

However, in order to increase their effectiveness, acquire financial support or partnership with third parties, diaspora organizations need to professionalized their activities, prove that they are credible and are committed to represent the whole community from the country of origin, regardless their societal and cultural diversity.

# Conclusions

The primary objective of this research paper was actually to investigate the effective participation of Liberian diaspora in the Netherlands in peace building activities in their country of origin. The following paragraphs provide a brief conclusion of information covered in previous sections.

In relation with the types and organization of Liberian diaspora in the Netherlands, the field research shows that the set-up of Liberian diaspora organizations is related not only to the institutional and political opportunity structures available in the country of residence but also to the characteristics of the groups involved and their different stages of settlement. This means that, the foundation of the organizations is based on the ethnic, religious and social fragmentation that exists within the Liberian community. For example, the main associations are established in such that only members that belong to the concerning tribe or religion could participate. In this sense, it is argued that the fragmentation within the Liberian diaspora is largely caused by personal differences and ethnic conflicts that spilled over from the country of origin.

Although most of the diaspora associations are formally registered, in fact, they virtually operate in an informal way. Therefore, lack of information on all diaspora organizations make it impossible to determine the actual number of Liberian diaspora organizations in the Netherlands. Further, it is suggested that the number of registered Liberian diaspora in the Netherlands could reach 3000 migrants; however, the instability and migration of diaspora to other EU countries also undermine this assumption. Next, to that, the investigation indicates that the scope of organizations varies. Certain organizations are larger than others, and the average of members lies between 60 and 100 people.

In order to coordinate and unite the diaspora associations, an umbrella organization was established by the sister organizations. The umbrella organizations (Liberian Association Holland) strives to oversee the sister organizations activities, reconcile Liberian diaspora and represent them at a higher level. However, tribalism and internal dispute that exist between sister organizations is an important phenomenon which is jeopardizing the perseverance of the mother organization (LAH), and the harmony between the sister associations as well. Concerning the association’s income, it appears that membership fees, organizing lucrative events and developing projects proposals are the conventional ways of acquiring financial resources. One remarkable point is that not all associations were able to develop projects proposals due to language problems and lack of highly skilled personals. Projects proposals are often initiated by the mother organization. Besides, it is observed that the organizations works seldom with Dutch government or other Dutch peace building and development agencies like Cordaid, ADPC, and CCoLA etc.

Regarding the participation of diaspora in the social development and peace building processes in the country of origin, the two case studies on Liberian diaspora communities in the Netherlands have revealed a wide scope of activities of potentially constructive diaspora interventions. These activities are directly or indirectly implemented, targeting actors and processes in the country of origin directly or through an engagement with third parties in the residence country or at the international level. For instance, besides providing emergency relief operations, other peace building activities includes: organizing conferences, seminars and other events to raise awareness and exchange information on the conflict transformation, lobbying governments or international organizations and NGOs in the country of origin, and implementing social development and reconstruction projects to local communities in country of origin. On the other hand, it is significant to note that the diaspora organizations are doing little efforts to support its members in terms of improving their integration process in the host country or implement capacity building training for their staffs while empowering their migrants is an indispensable aspect for diaspora to be able to perform effectively.

As for the challenges of diaspora constructive engagement in peace building and development processes in the country of origin, initial findings from the organizations interviewed point to a complex mix of a number of issues, ranging from lack of financial resources, tribalism within the organizations themselves, and awful relations with authorities in the country of origin. First of all, obtaining financial resources is considered as an important obstacle that constraints the participation of diasporas. For instance, as the associations rely on membership fees and donations, accumulating funds is an outstanding challenge for the organizations because government and donor agencies in host country generally set high conditions, especially in terms of developing project proposals. While migrants mostly have language problems and lack of understanding the Dutch co-financing system, requirements for grants sometimes prove to be very difficult for the diaspora.

Other social issues, such as obtaining residence status and lack of job opportunities in the country of residence discourage the migrant to participate and force them to migrate to other EU or North American countries. In addition, it is found that fragmentation within diaspora communities is another significant aspect that delimits and shapes diaspora activities. These divisions are related to the internal conflicts within diasporas communities. In fact, it appears that fragmentation within Liberian diaspora is largely influenced by the previous civil wars, and it is still difficult for members of opposed parties to forget the past and establish a sustainable reconciliation.

Finally, it is also significant to note that lack of trust and good relationship between government in the country of origin and certain diaspora associations largely influences the participation of diaspora. The perception of authorities in the country of origin towards certain diaspora groups as opposition supporters and or conflicts promoters, make it impossible for these groups to access support from the government or conduct peace building projects in the country of origin effectively.

# Recommendations

Based on the information gathered so far, this section provides the following recommendations for Liberian diaspora organizations. These recommendations could be useful for them in terms of improving their participation strategies in peace building processes effectively.

As the research shows that transparency, accountability, inclusiveness and cooperation within the national and transnational context are critical criteria for the effective participation of diaspora organizations in peacebuilding activities, the participation of Liberian diaspora organizations, in contrasts, is largely impeded by lack of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. In this regard, it is recommended that:

1. Diaspora organizations should professionalize their peace building operations. These include performing formally, setting clear objectives and procedures, and providing audit and records reports. In fact, doing this will eventually enable them to show accountability and transparency.
2. As inclusiveness is another important condition for an effective participation of diasporas, Liberian diaspora need to improve the cooperation within their organizations and eradicate the existing fragmentation between them.
3. Besides providing financial support, diaspora organizations should focus on capacity building of local organizations. Such as implementing peace building projects ( through consultative workshops and or trainings) that could enable the local organizations in country of origin to organize themselves and overcome the obstacles by themselves.
4. Diaspora organizations should increase their cooperation with the Dutch peacebuilding and development NGOs such as Cordaid, ADPC, and CCoLA. Working closely with those NGOs will certainly help them to improve their peace building and development strategies and skills as well.

# References

African Diaspora Policy Centre, (2014). ADPC Annual Report 2014. Retrieved July 10, 2017,

from:<http://www.diaspora-centre.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Final-ADPC-Annual-Report.pdf>

African Union African Diaspora Sixth Region. (2013). Retrieved May 15, 2017, from:

<http://auads-nl.org/au-sixth-region/>

Bekoe, D &Parajon, C. (2006). Liberia's peacebuilding Effort: One Year after Transition.

Retrieved May 15, 2017, from the Usip website:<http://www.usip.org/publications/liberias-peacebuilding-effort-one-year-after-transition>

Crowther, S. (2001). The Role of NGOs, Local and International, in Post-war Peacebuilding.

Retrieved June 07, 2017, from: <http://www.c-r.org/downloads/newsletter15.pdf>

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2008). Policy Memorandum. *International Migration and*

*Development 2008*. Retrieved June 30, 2017, from: <file:///C:/Users/Eigenaar/Downloads/policy-memorandum-international-migration-and-development-2008.pdf>

Ezatti, R., Sinatti, G.,&Warnecke, A. (2010, August). *Diasporas as partners in conflict*

*resolution and peacebuilding*. The Hague: African Diaspora Policy Centre.

Fickling, D. (2006, April 03). Charles Taylor and Liberia’s civil wars. Retrieved July 03,

2017, from the Guardian website: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/apr/03/westafrica.qanda>

How is development cooperation funded? (n.d.). Retrieved June 30, 2017, from the Dutch

government website: <https://www.government.nl/topics/development-cooperation/financing-development-cooperation/how-is-development-cooperation-funded>

McCandless, E., Smith, F., &Prosnitz, B. (2012). Peace Dividends and Beyond.

*Contributions of administrative and social services to peacebuilding*. Retrieved May 14, 2017, from the United Nations website: <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/peace_dividends.pdf>

Now the hard work begins: passing the peace baton in Liberia. (2015). Retrieved May 15,

2017, from the ISS Africa website: <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/now-the-hard-work->begins-passing-the-peace-baton-in-liberia

Peinado, M.M. (n.d.). The role of NGOs and the civil society in peace and reconciliation

processes. Retrieved June 16, 2017, from: <http://www.ceipaz.org/images/contenido/Role%20of%20NGOs%20and%20civil%20society%20in%20peacebuilding.pdf>

Sinatti, G. (2010, June). *Key criteria of “good practice” for constructive diaspora*

*engagement in peacebuilding*. The Hague: African Diaspora Policy Centre.

Towards Peaceful and Inclusive Societies. (2015). *Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding*

*and State building (CSPPS) 2015 Annual Report*. Retrieved June 25, 2017, from the Cord aid website: <https://www.cordaid.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/12/CSPPS-AR2015-Final.pdf>

UN Secretary – General. (2009, June 11). *Report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding*

*in the immediate aftermath of conflict*. Retrieved May 13, 2017, from the United Nations website: <http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/63/881>

Uzuegbunam, A.O. (2013). Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Conflict and Peace

Building in Nigeria. Retrieved June 10, 2017, from: <http://file.scirp.org/pdf/OJPP_2013022614183831.pdf>

Voorhoeve, J. (2007). From War to the Rule of Law. *Peace Building after violent conflict*.

Retrieved May 11, 2017, from: <file:///C:/Users/Eigenaar/Downloads/V016-War-Rule-Law.pdf>

Warnecke, A. (2010). Diasporas and Peace. *A Comparative Assessment of Somali and*

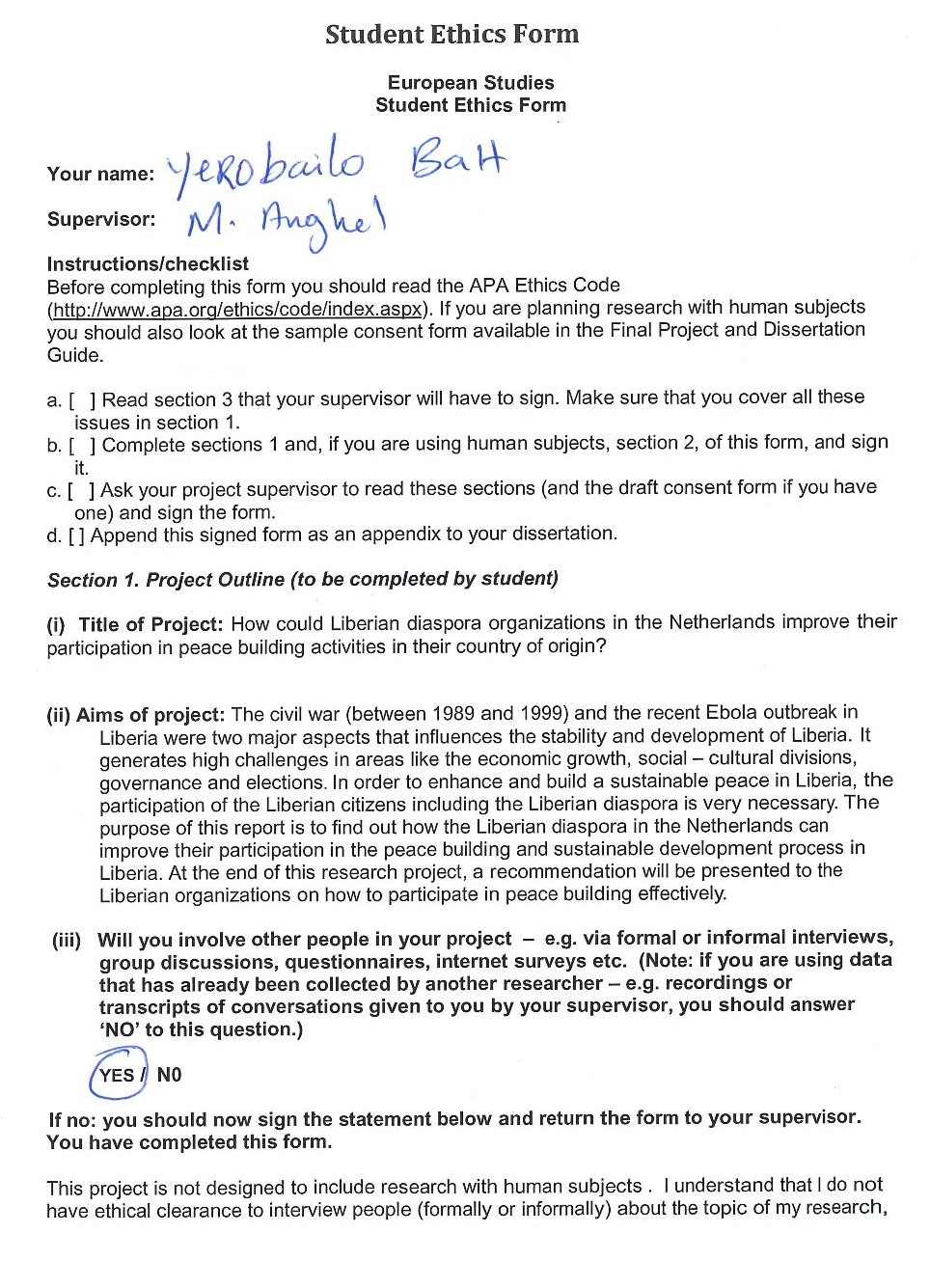
*Ethiopian Communities in Europe ( 7th framework programme)*. The Hague: African Diaspora Policy Centre.

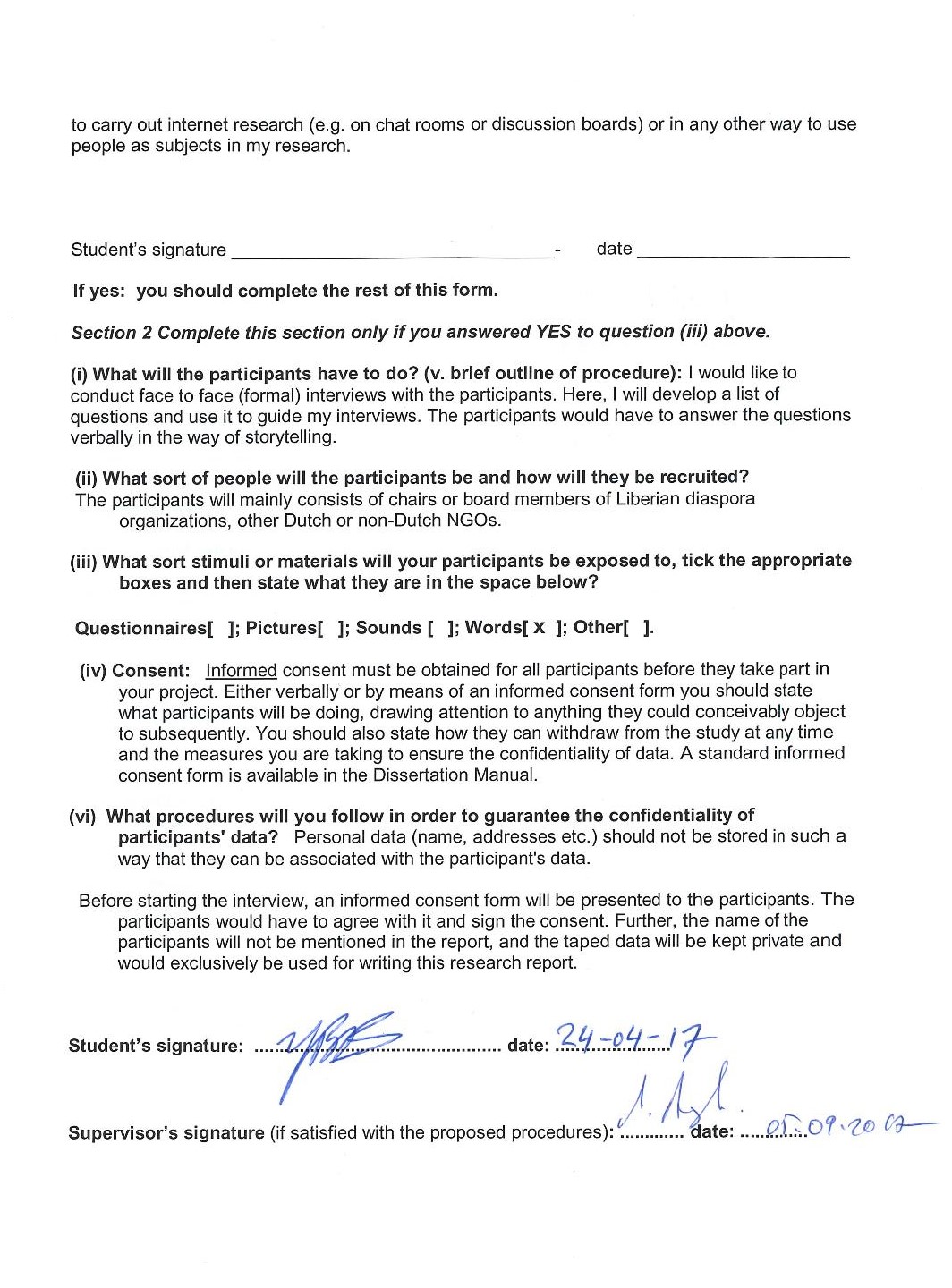
What is peacebuilding? (n.d.). Retrieved May 10, 2017, from the United Nations website:

<http://www.unpbf.org/application-guidelines/what-is-peacebuilding/>

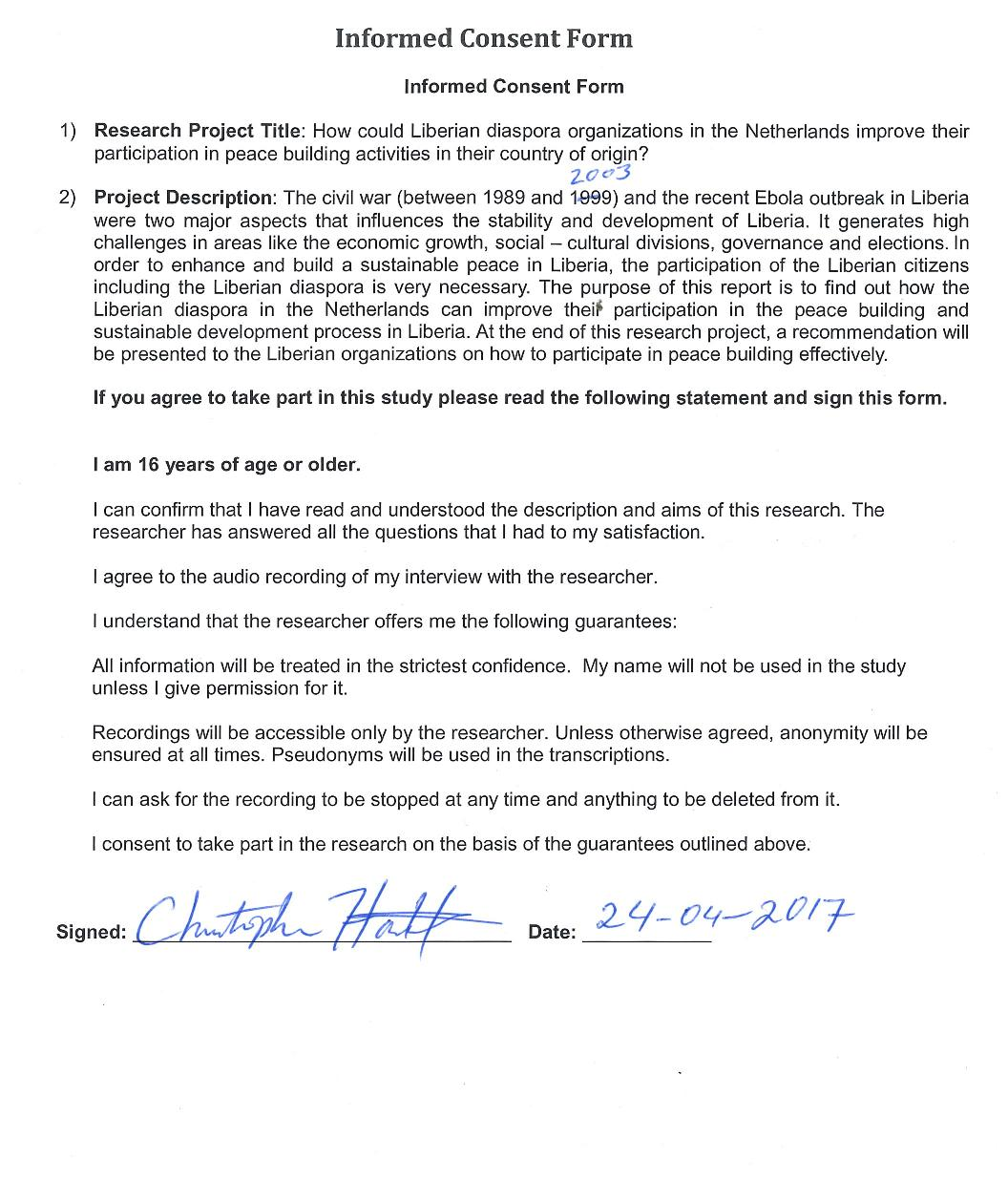
# Appendices:

### Appendix 1: Student Ethics Form

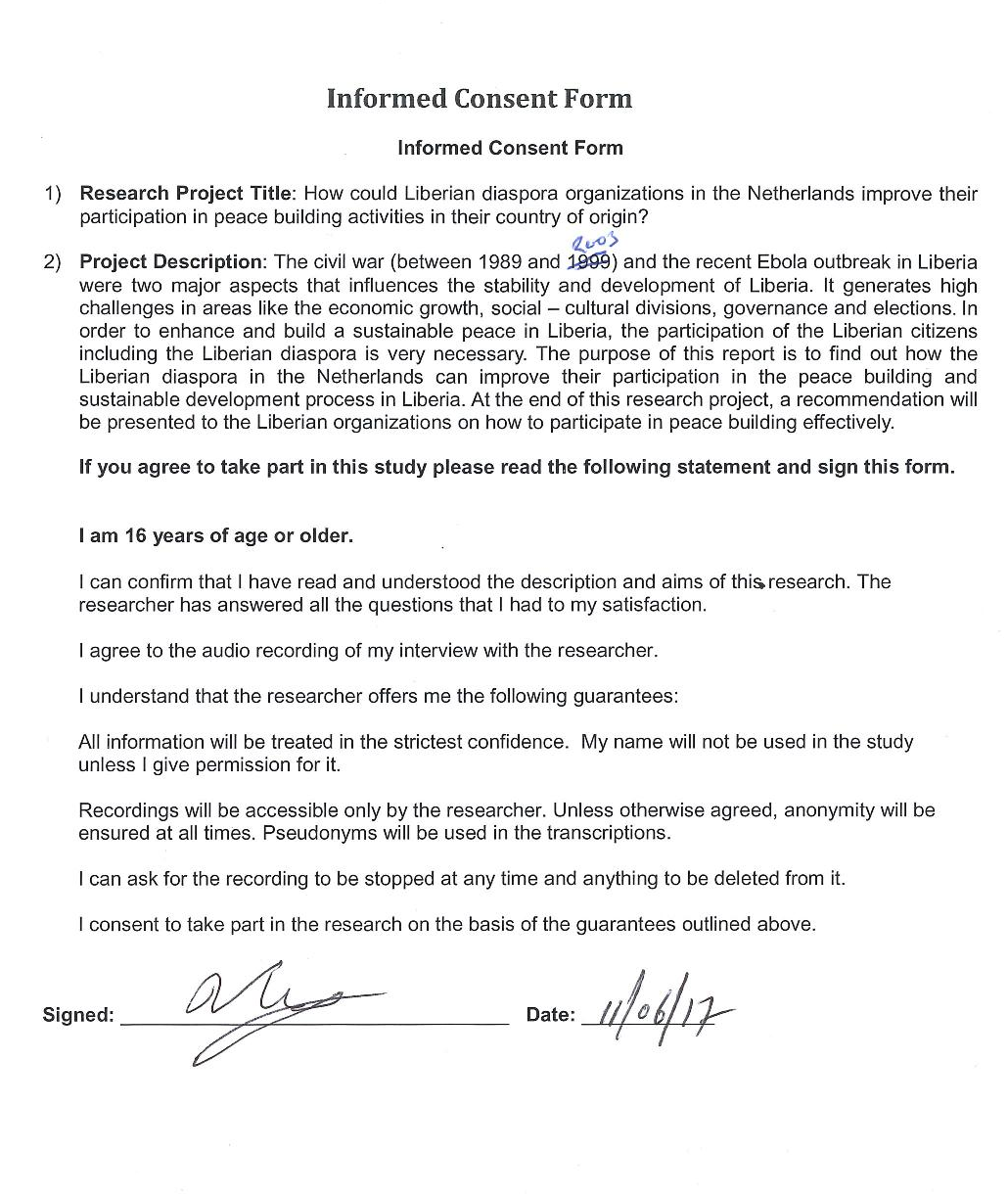




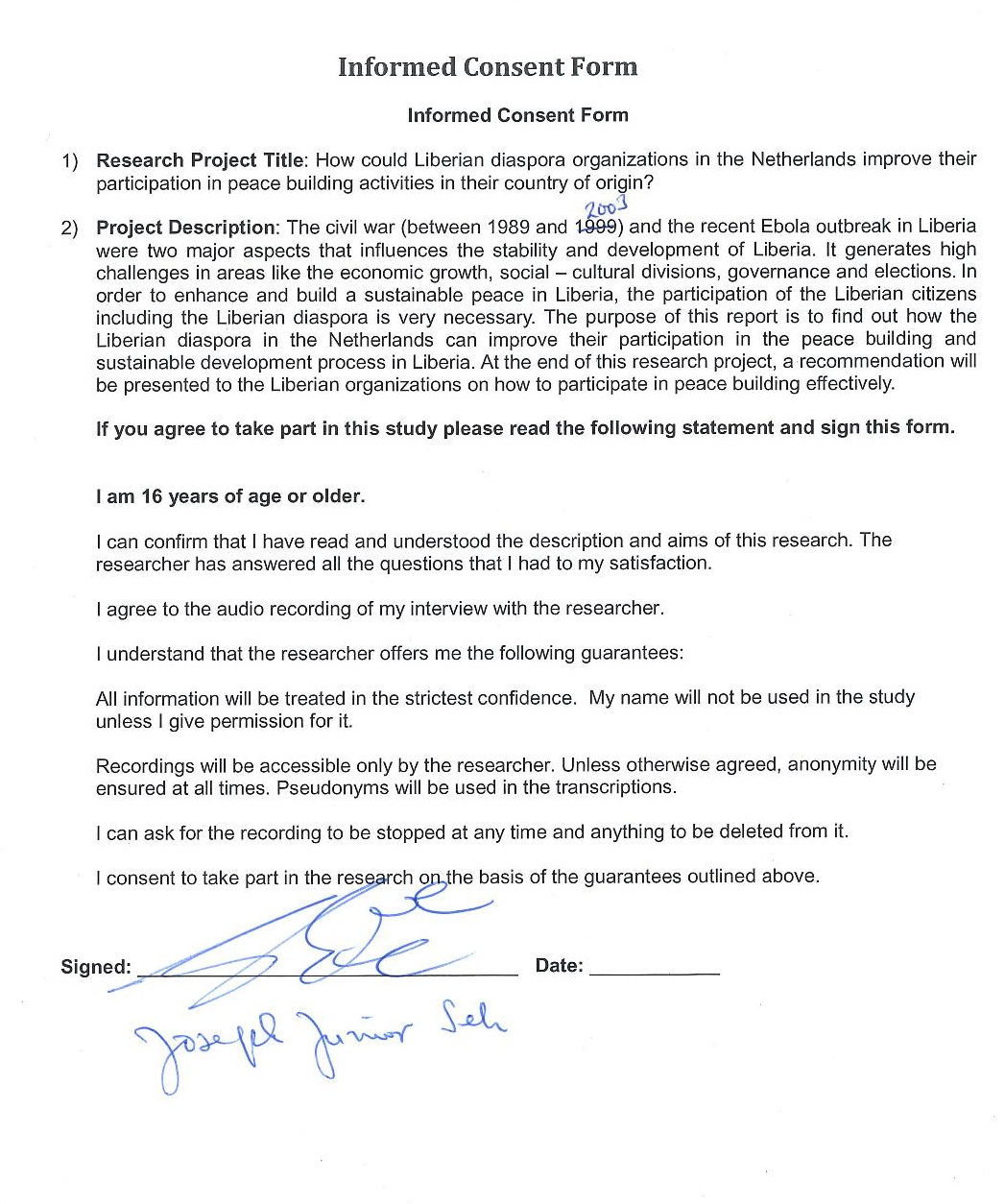
### Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form – LAH



### Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form - Bengoma



### Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form – CCoLA



### Appendix 5: Interview Transcript – LAH

Interview transcript with Cristopher Harmon president LAH

Utrecht, 24 April 2017

*Thank you mr Harmon for having time for me for the interview, hmmm*

You are welcome.

*Yeah, hmm my name is yerobailobah, and I’m doing European Studies at the Hage University, Uhhmm, and as i mentioned in the introduction, I would like to have interview with concerning the Liberian diaspora in the Netherlands, hmmm my first question is, could you tell me about Liberian organisations, their vision and structure?*

Yeah, well Liberian Association Holland was foundered purposely to unite Liberians in the Netherlands, and then we decided to extend our operation to Liberia our own country. The first purpose was to get every Liberian together here, and to observe our culture values. And work on problems are affecting the community the Liberian community, and then after war we tried to see what we can do for our people back home.

*Uhhmm*

But then we have to, first what we did we send people to Liberia, they carried on facility studies, to know the things that people very need. Things that are in need. We ask for some contribution, sometimes we ask some donors around here they do help and then we help our people back home.

*Uhhmm*, *so that is the purpose?*

Yeah, uniting getting the Liberians together first number one, and seeking each other welfare and helping our people back home, that is the main prupose of the organisation.

*Uhhmmm, how are you structured then, how many organisations do you have here? How many diaspora org?*

Ehhmm, we have, we have the mother organisation which is called Liberian Association Holland (LAH), I think you can see it from the chamber of commerce, and then we have sub, we have sub branches. We have like in Rotterdam, we get Liberian Association Rotterdam. And ehhmm we have other tribal, tribal associations from Liberia, but based on tribe, on region. But the mother organisation called LAH, like for example you are a Foullah, Foullah people will come togehter, sometimes they meet

*Ofcourse*,

And they discourse, but it doesn’t mean that they are not part of the organization. They are part of the organisation, and they just come together to help themselves, but they belong to the mother organisation which is called LAH.

*That is coordinating all those organisations and everythings?*

Yes, everythings, we oversee everyhtings, if there is a problem, even in their organisation, the mother organisationintervain, because sometimes you have misunderstanding. Maybe the Foullah, or sometimes the Mandingo they have problem among themselves, and if they cannot handle it, they contact the mother organisation to intervene sometimes

*Uhhhm, and what is your position in the organisation?*

Ehhmm, for the moment I am the acting president of the Liberian Association, I am the chair (voorzitter) they called it in Dutch. Acting president, until we have election, the election is in two months time, I mean in ninety days. In ninety days there will be election. And, ehhm after that election we will have our legitimate leadership, but for now I am acting president

*Okee, okee, and ehhm how many diaspora, how many Liberians are here? Can you give an estimation?*

Ooo, we are talking like ehhmm about 3000 Liberians

*Waaw, really?*

Yes, about 3000 Liberians, but most time the problems here is they are always in and out, Liberians they go to the United States, spend some time, sometimes they back here, sometimes to go to Belgium, sometimes they go to England. But they all based here. They are registered here, they registered in the system here. Sometimes we are having activity, they come. They are officially registered here.

*Hmmm, and how does it work within you organisations, how did you find ehhmm? Because you said the first purpose is to unite the people bring them together?*

Yes

*And in other to keep your culture or something like that? And you also tried to help ehhmm*

People from our background!!

*People from your country?*

Yes

*How did you do that? How did you get the funding?*

Oooh, we normally we do contribution for each meeting we have. Everybody charged to pay sometimes 100 ueros. And when we do the contribution, and we see that it is not enough we Carry on projects or shows, things that will makes to generate funds, sometimes we have dancing concerts, and then people pay to enter and then we raised money. The money we raised it is not enough, sometimes we contact some other donors. Like sometimes we contact RABO BANK. We contact ING BANK, we write projects proposals to them, explain what we want to do, and sometimes they give us finances.

*Okee, okee, okee, so you often initiate projects proposals?*

Yeah

*And does it ehmm, are you succeeding in that?*

Yeah, some response positively, some people respond and some people don’t. And I mean we don’t, we don’t have any regret in it, if we don’t, and if you can or see a reason of helping us.

We do appreciate it, but not everybody can say or they give us money. Like during the Ebola crisis in 2014, there are some all those Dutch people individuals who are donating to for beds and hospital equipments, or some others things to help or ambulances and other things they gave us, we put them on ship and shipped them to Liberia.

*Okee, and how did you.. what did you do in Liberia? What kind of …*

Ohmm, ohhmm

*Becides, becides, becides this Ebola intervention? And do you have any specific projects that you… ?*

Yeah, yeah, yeah in Liberia, sometimes we help to pay fees, for students who do WAEC, the West African Examination Council, yeah , they don’t have money, the organization here help and pay, pay all fees for students, but ehhm it comes with some criteria, you must be qualified for that, so because if we say we gonna pay everybody fees, is not possible. So we look for the A students most of the time or B students. People that meets that criteria, people that we see bright future in them, so we give them that opportunity to push them, because we cannot afford. If we could, we can pay for everybody. So but there is condition for the help, if you meet it, then we pay your WAEC, and sometimes we pay school fees for other students, and we also try to bring other students over here to Holland on students exchange.

*Uhmm, okee, schorlaship?*

Yes, schorlaship we do work on that!!!

*Uhmmm, okee, and do you also do ehhm peace education?*

Yeah, yeah, we are, we, we have initiated this ehhm of peacebuilding process. Because the war in Liberia was based on tribal sentiment

*Tribalism?*

Yeah, tribalism, ethnicity. So what we do we try to bring people together and tell people that what you are doing with this tribal you have to put this in the past, so that you come together, and we work on that initiate two brains, and organized things and play together, so people we learn living together in one is the best way forward. That’s where we are involve in

*Uhmm, okee. Have you been successful in that?*

Yeah, yeah we are a step forward, but it just not easy, because the war is still fresh in the mind of the people. And, there is no gun shooting now, you understand? So we are trying now to tell the people to wash away that thinking, that you don’t have to kill your brother if he don’t belong to you . We always ask for forgiveness, when we came to Holland, we are well integrated in the Dutch society, and they told us to co-exist. Yeah to live with each other, they have been fought here too before!! And then we try to explain that, and writing some books, some ehhehhmm little leaflets explaining our people that for example, maybe you are from Konnoh and the other man is from Freetown and the people from Konnoh and Freetown are fighting war. Every time they are enemy. What we do, we go to Konnoh, we go to Freetown we bring people together we say gonna build a house here in Konnoh and one house in Freetown. Anybody that comes from Freetown, a Freetown resident comes to Konnoh who don’t have a sleeping place and want to sleep here… You can sleep there for five days, it is your right to sleep there for five days, Konnoh people will give you protection. Undernstand that?

*Yeah*

So Konnoh people go to Freetown, if you don’t have place to sleep in Freetown, you go there to sleep only for five days, then you find your way out, because is your country. But we do that for peace sake. Because in Liberia, there were two tribe fighting war the Nimba and the Granjida people. The tribe of Samuel Doh and the tribe of Prince Johnson, who slaughtered Samuel Doh. So they were bitter enemies, so what we are doing, we bring them together, because people from Samuel Doh place will not go to Prince Johnson Place. So we try to bring them together, we created that idea. So if you are from Prince Johnson place and you come to Samuel Doh place you don’t have sleeping place, go to the prince Johnson embassy there, we call it embassy yeah. You can just sleep there until you find your way out. They fit you five days, you find your way.

*Just international idea in local level?*

Yes local level!!! Yeah to help. So these are the initiatives of peacebuilding, to tell the people that you are free to go there don’t be afraid. If you go there they will not kill you. If you don’t have place to sleep. There is a place for you to sleep for free

*Yeah, and this is done by the diaspora here?*

Yes the diasporas

*And this diaspora consists of all kinds of Liberian tribes?*

Every tribes in Liberia are aware of that idea!!!

*Okee, nice. And it is successful so far?*

And it is successful, we even take people from Prince Johnson place to go to school in Samuel Doh place for free we pay your school fees go there free. People from Samuel Dohplacego to prince Johnson place go to school free, we pay you there live free, because before you don’t do that. You go there they kill you. So we do that so that you can be free and know that ooh people from Johnson place they are good..

*Yes, so that they can feel home?*

Feel at home, so we, we initiated all those programs.

*How is the situation right now in Liberia? What is the actual situation in Liberia?*

In Liberia?

*Is it improving or?*

The situation there, I will tell you it is improving, because there is no sounds of the guns, that’s the most important thing. We have peace. There is no fighting but the people are suffering from economic slavery. Because some people don’t have food to eat, only government officials are stealing the money, they are thieves. There are lot of people suffering. And this thing is the origin of trouble. Because the people followed the war before, they are hungary, they just bear because they don’t want war. At least is not good to be hungary but they are not killing you.

*Ja, ja,*

But on the other hand, it should not be like that because some people will not handle it, and they go and steal, arm robbed and kills somebody for food, and things should not happen. But we are, I mean they are happy, they are happy, they are moving but only the economic or crisis…

*Yeah, that is another issue*

Yeah, yeah those are the problems.

*Ok, uhmm besides these projects are you also involve in other projects?*

Yeah, we involve in safe, safe drinking water, in some towns some villages. We dig ehhmm the ball hole pump, pump there because the people are drinking from the running water which is not safe it gives people diaree. So we get on the system from Holland here, we asked the Dutch people to dig the big well, and then they did some clohrine in it. People drink from safe drinking water. And public toilets, toilets have being build, because people don’t have decent toilet. They just toilet everywhere or over the place. So we initiated this thing. Good toilets, public toilets, and the eehmm some bridges or if the road is not good, we tried to make the roads at least so that the people will be able to walk on the road. These the things we are working on.

*Ja, oke. Are you also working with other diaspora or Dutch organizations?*

No, not exactly we are doing it by ourselves, but sometimes we ask for subsidies from the Dutch government. They give us subsidies, and with that subsidies they want to see what you have done with the money. And you have to show that you are very transparent in what you have done.

*Uhmm, and what… you are not working for example with Guinean or Sierra Leonean organization?*

Not at this moment, we planned to involve all Guinean, Sierra Leonean and all West African ECOWAS, we want to unite. This is a big idea for the Liberian Association. There is time we have big event every year from the ECOWAS state. Then from there we move on to EU citizens, all, all Africans. But you have to start somewhere first.

*Exactly!!!*

So we are, we gonna start with ECOWAS state, ECOWAS members. When you are from ECOWAS country, West Africa… .We try to contact your association, and then inform them and sell our ideas, at least once in a year we can come together with different culture.

*Exactly, I think that will be a good idea!!! To create a platform and…*

That’s what we are doing.

*You are working on it?*

Yeah we are working on it

*Are you also working with Liberian diasporas in abroad?*

Ja, ja, ja

*For example, Liberian diaspora in Belgium, France and Engand?*

Ja, we have something called EFLA, the European Federation of Liberian Associations. So for all Liberians in Europe. Yes, this year we will be going to Sweden, last year we were in Belgium ( Antwerp). We celebrated there.

*Okee, do you also have website?*

Yes, EFLA has get a website, when you go there , you just go Liberian Association and then you will see the whole thing will come on google

*Uhmm, okee*

Just google Liberian Association

*Okee, and, and what are the challenges are encountering so far?*

Oohhhhh, EFLA challenges like some………?

*I mean your association LAH!!*

LAH, yeah the challenges are, we always have some fighting during elections, some people go to election and they are not satisfied, and tribalism is still going on.

*It’s still going on?*

Yeah, it’s still going on indirectly, we tried to fight that. Sometimes we have election and disagreements goes on. People will tell ohhh the election is not right because this tribe won the election, and we tried to avoid that. We have election on two different occasion, and the results did not stand. So these are challenges we are still going through

*Okee, it’s all about tribalism*

Tribalism is still, still high and the ethnicity. Tribalism as I said, something very delicate and we working on it.

*Okee, and what about financial resources? Is that easy for you or….?*

Financial resources here in Holland, eehmm as I said everybody got an income, we do contribution and we ask for subisidies. So we get subsidies, and we, we carry on projects to raise funds, to raise money like when we go to Belgium last time with EFLA, we pay to enter the hall 10 euros, then you buy drinks there. If you pay one bottle of Coke outside maybe for 50 cent, but when you go to the Liberian place (EFLA) you get it for 1 euro, it’s because for us to raise money.

*Uhmm. Oke and what are you doing to solve this ethnicity that still exist between the diaspora? What you doing to …?*

As I said, we are, we are working it because it’s in the mind of the people. It is not easy. If you see Liberians together they are happy talking, they don’t say it….yeah ..no eehmm when you leave, the mandingo men will start to speak mandingo and they will say ohhh this people don’t like us because they are Christians, and we are Muslims. They don’t want us to be president. They don’t say this when we come together, but sometimes you will hear it outside, and going to election they show out, they don’t want to vote for Mandingo man. Yeah, you understand?

*Yeah, then it explodes.*

Yes, it’s explodes, but it just not.. I mean it just not something you say he is oke come on, is not something that, that, that ehmm, is not something that is visible

*Yes, okeee. Uhhmm we are about to finish our interview. I just have two more questions…*

Ja, okee

*Ehmmm, there are many organisations here, for example that are helping diaspora to improve their capacities, for example through empowering, training or learning. Are you involve in that?*

Yeah, ja, ja, we as I said we have some hmmm misunderstanding in our organisation. We are going to election now, but we have contacted some Dutch to train our people in various fields. Like ehhmehmm trade, some people want to do sewing, some people want to do engineering, some people want to do boek keeping. We have organisation around that will help you and teach you these things and impact knowledge in you. There are lot of people like that but we have not reach that level because of the infighting.

*Ehmm, okee. I mean also like you have organisation called African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) in the Hague, have you heard about this organisation?*

Yeah, we are part of it, even our ourehmmm president before, our former president was the president of that organization.but the time he left we have in fighting within ourselves, we are still fighting ourselves, so we are not there yet. Again since 2003 we have this problem, so we are still.. until we have a president, I am the interim president now, and until we can structure the leadership, then now we can start extending again.

*Uhmm, okee. Then the last question ehmm which projects have you done that you are very proud of. Yeah that you think that was very important?*

Yeah, yeah. There are different different projects we did involve in, and we are proud and we have done something. We did receive appreciation from the people in Liberia, and it really helped them. The public wells, as I said the pump, the public toilets, we have been paying school fees, we have helped a lot of these advantages students, and the community those that have no safe and clean drinking water, and those that have no public toilets. It helped them a lot and they are proud of it, because we receive their appreciation every time. Yeah, so and the Ebola time or even before the Ebola time we did these things and they are happy with the results, they live with it and see it every day, so they still think about us.

*Okee, do you also know how many Liberian organizations are existing in the Netherlands?*

Liberian organizations?

*Yes, because you said there are many tribes.*

Yeah, yeah. We have maybe 10. We have about 10 different groups, but most them are not functional now, people are living and then, you are not coming together you know? But they have the name they are there. They are even registered in KVK, but we don’t see them again. Even when we to the KVK the last time they showed us a list of all these organizations, but they don’t see the people, they are not active anymore.

*Yeah, uhmmm. Ok thank you for helping me with this interview, and I really appreciate ehmm what you are doing, and this is the end of this interview.*

Yes, thank you too.

### Appendix 6: Interview Transcript – Bengoma

Interview transcript with Vani KoromacoördinatorBengoma Association.

Amsterdam , 11 June 2017

*Mr Vani Koroma thank you for having time for me to conduct this interview*

You are welcome

*Can you introduce your self, and tell me more about your organisations here in the Ntherlands?*

Ok , thank you very much for having. My name is Vani Koroma I am the coördinator of our organization Bengoma association here in the Netherlands. We called it in Dutch Bengomavereniging. So as we all know we have invited you to have interview with us…..So we are here today with two brothers Musa Cherif former executive member and the chair of Bengoma Association Mufti. They can introduce themself to you.

*Okeee*

My name is Musa Cherif also ex –official of Bengoma Association in the Netherlands. I was the member of evaluation committee chairman, and time there was some political situation. I was there to evaluate, differentiate the Liberian Madingo and other Madingo. Yeah that was my position you understand…

*Uhmmm, ok thank you. And what about Mufti?*

Yeah, my name is Mufti Yusuf Ababouje, and heem I am assistent imam and also the chair of the BengomaVereninging Nederland.

*Okee. Can you tell me more about the Bengoma Association?*

Yeah, thank you very much for asking me that question. Is me again VanyKoroma general coördinator of Bengoma Association here in the Netherlands. This is an organization that is funded by Liberian Madingo here in Holland. So it was founded in 1998 in the Netherland. That time I was not even here in the Netherland or Europe. So it is an old organization. It was founded for our brothers here in Europe to unite them. Keep our culture alive, and also make sure that our tradition and religion everywhere were we take it with us. And as we all know in the Western society we live in a different matter of issues…So is very important to have our religion and our cultures, and tradition with us every where we are. We the Madingo we like that and we always do that. So our brothers they came here before us and take that initiative to fund this organization, so any other people come and meet them here have to join the organization and help them build the organization forward.

*So that was the thethepopurse?*

Yeah, that was the popurse why the organization was funded. As we all know from that day till now things has changed, our living situation in the Western societies and also back home in Liberia. So besides the main popurse we tried also to involve some other new things within the organization. That means every body that are Madingo from West Africa, he don’t have to be from Liberia, if you can speak Madingo you from Liberia or not from Liberia you can join this organization.. And also if you are a Madingo and you are living in Europe, any where in Europe you can join this organization. So those are new things that we ehmm decide to add. Bring our brothers and sisters together. So since that time now from here, my brother here who just introduced himself to you Musa Cherif, I htink because he was here before us, he was here from very long time…

*Uhmmmm*

He can tell us more about Bengoma Association, how the initiative was done and why. He explain those things for us.

Thank you very much for having me, I remember me as a Madingo from Liberia, and you know during the war in 1990 we were targeted because of our religion, because of who we are, you understand?

*Uhmmmm*

Most of the Liberians left the country, we came and met ourselves in the Netherlands, so after we came here that happend 1990 understand, we were targeted because of our religion, because of lot of things. Some of us left, we came here when we here 1990, 91, 92, 93, we decided to regoup ourselves and then to have an association. But before then all of us were assylum seekers, you understand? There where a lot of Madingo, when you say Madingo, it means Madingo from all West African countries. So because lot of people use to come here and declare themselves as Liberian Madingo, we decided to differentiate and tell the Dutch government that we are the real Liberian Madingo we were targeted.

*Uhmmm, okee*

So how come Bengoma was founded, that happend 1998 when we have the first meeting in Amsterdam Nord, understand

*Yes, uhmm*

We started to call a Group of people, regroup ourselves and named the association Bengoma. Bengoma means Unity.

*Unity, okee. So how many members and how big is Bengoma Association?*

Well, I can say, I think the coördinator can elaborate how many members we have.

*Or you don’t know the exact amount?*

Yeah, from now we have here in the Netherlands about 800 members including the Madingo people from other West African countries.

*Yes just the Bengoma members, it doesn’t matter from which country they come from*

I can say, it should be 800.000 plus you understand, first of all most of the Madingo….

*You said 800.000 or 800?*

I said 800.000 because most of the people has left , and the actual members we have in the Netherlands here is about 800 plus. Last year we checked our data base, things have changed a lot of people has gone. Like I told you before, within the organization we try involve people even if you are not from Liberia, but if you are Madingoehmmm….. Yeah Madingo Association. First of all it was Madingo Association. At that time, we have the Liberian Association in Holland (LAH), but then we decided to differentiate because of our culture, what my brother just said, because of our culture and religion. You know that very well becuase you are a Fullah from Sierra Leone…..There are certain things, you know we do it in Sierra Leone. We have Mende, we have Temene, Olloko, we have Koronko all these we our own culture, like name giving by birth or burial ceremony. So we decided to keep our culture together, otherwise we have our modern organization which we all Liberian we join you understand?

*Uhmmm , that is LAH?*

Yes, that is LAH, we decided to keep this organization Bengoma. It was a political organization at that time, from 1998, 99, 2000 it was political organization. But later we were able to change it you understand he, although all the Madingo we are 100% moslims, no doubt.

*So if I understand, you have a lot of Liberian organizations in the Netherlands? Becasue you said, you have Bengoma, and you are under LAH. So are there any other Liberian organizations? Because Liberia have many tribes. Those tribes might also have their own Association.*

Yeah, because I remember, the past two or three years we have Jibamu here, we have others…

*Are they under LAH too?*

Yes, they are all under LAH

*But you don’t exactly how many are they?*

The only active association so far that I know is Bengoma. In other cities like Enschede they might also have their own association…

*But you don’t know them?*

Yes, I don’t know them

*Okee, so what is the role of LAH then?*

Well, LAH is our mother organization, even when LAH was doing election last year, I was appointed to be the coördinator between Bengoma and LAH, but because we have some political situation it didn’t go well, so that’s it, otherwise LAH is our mother organization and it is supervising all other association.

*Okee, what is the link between Bengoma and LAH exactly? Because I didn’t understand it. What is LAH doing for Bengoma or why are you under LAH?*

Liberian Association in Holland (LAH), is for the whole country that is the nation….

*You mean it is the umbrella of Liberian associations in the Netherlands?*

Yeah, that is the umbrella of all associations. So because in Liberia we have about 16 tribes, we decided to keep our own culture and religion, and work with other Liberians through LAH. We support each other, but because there were conflict between us during the past you years, we decide to keep quiet and stay aside first.

*So you mean the cooperation between you and LAH is not going well?*

No, we are still cooperating, even the last time when we got the mosque, their president were able donate two clock, during the opening of the mosque he was here. We are working together!

*Okee, so you are working together?*

Yes

*Okee, becide your cooperation, are you also working together to do things in Liberia like conducting projects or..?*

No, not yet, but Bengoma is doing something better, like we have our own scholarship fund and other projects will come soon. For now we have our own project. The scholarship fund university, high school….

*How did you do that, what are you doing exactly?*

The scholarship funds?

*Uhmmm, yes*

We have people in the university which we are sponsoring there in Liberia.

*You sponsor education in Liberia?*

Yeah education. During the Ebola crisis we also donated some other things to Liberian Red Cross there.

*Uhmm, okee and ehmm are you also participating in peacebuilding activities in other ways?*

Yeah, well when I was a member of the executive board, at least we were participating in peacebuilding especially to bring Charles Tylor to justice. We influenced his trial by providing news briefs, sending emails to.. that time there were some treaths for us. We were acused like we are regrouping ourselves as Madingo to go and fight back in Liberia. We even went to meet Amnesty International, and we tried to inform them what is going on. For now I can’t remeber which other peacebuilding activities we are doing. I think our coördinator here can explain if we have other peacebuilding projects…

*Okee. Beside the education project and interventions during the Ebola crisis, are there other activities that you are doing in Liberia?*

Yeah, there are many things to do, but as we all know the organization have been in crisis for many times, about bringing people together, making people united on certain things at certain levels. So those things were our target from the last few years. But now we have been planning to have our project to a place in Liberia where to help a charity, just like to have own office place where our activities can be coordinated, not only here. But due to Financial situation, we could not do it directly like the way we want it. So those were the plans we decided from now on we focus on just sponsoring the student and other activities, and then we see how the communication and collaboration will work between us and the people in Liberia. So if the communication will go as we are especting , that will encourage us to invest more and do other things. Because we here and sometimes we will decide to do something in our country, but it can be mistranslated or miscommunication. Our brothers last time we were trying through the news paper to do certain things, and it happened in a way where we don’t espect. They were thinking that we are forming a Group here to go and fight back in Liberia. That give us the idea too first to think twice before we do our things. So we say we pass through our brothers organization, our sister organizations because there are lot of small small organizations who help here as charity and other things in Liberia.

*Uhmm, yeah*

It just an example about the scholarship issue, some people are thinking we are only soppurting the Madingo people in Liberia, and we say no that was not the issue. The time we decide to support students in Liberia, what we do we ask the journalist to make ehmmehmm how they called ehmm to make a news paper, to make a publicity not only for the Madingo, but for the general public. So we were able to set someone as ambassador to coordinate the project, assess who is qualified for the funds. So other press people were able to help us advertise and monitor this thing.

*Uhmm, okee*

Yeah, anything about Liberia we don’t make discrimation, we are from the same country we do it for Liberia. If you are a Madingo or from other tribe it doesn’t matter, we are all Liberians so we have to focus o none. As our brothers here in the Netherlands they were having broblems with the Liberian Madingo, especially when they came here to seek asaylum. So we have to make something to protect ourselves and to protect our community. That was the time we decide to create the Liberian Madingo Association, to protect our people, our culture and all these things.

*Okee, uhmmm*

So if its about Liberia we don’t make discrimination or what ever all these issues. So I just say an example about the education project. The university students we are supporting them. We are not there to decide to who to go to, we just make recommendation on news paper anybody qualified we sponsor you. It doesn’t if you come from this country, or any tribe. We majority of our members they don’t even know who we are supporting, is a Madino man or other tribe what’s ever, no body can tell you that, neither me can tell you that. That is why I tell you as for Liberia we don’t ….. but as from here , as our brother was saying about how we coordinate to LAH about the issue you know. Eehmm, ehhmm we have been facing many difficult things on LAH, but do our best we make sure we all have the same proposition it is about Liberia. You know here we live our culture, we live our religion, and we don’t against any other religion, that other culture, but we just like to let people know that we should respect each other culture, each other religion and we live for that as we lived in Liberia.

*Uhhmm, okee. As we know Liberia was in war that is why you came here, and there is tension and conflict between Liberian ethnics and tribes, how did you I mean what is your role in resolving the conflict. Did Bengoma Association did something to solve the conflict between the Liberian Diaspora here in the Netherlands or in Liberia? Beside the education project are you involve in the peace building proces? Did you understand my question?*

Uhmm, yes. First of all Liberian Association we were able to organize ourselves, and found the organization called Liberian European Federation (EFLA), you understand..?

*Uhmm*

All the liberians include all the liberian Associations would have to come together. First of all we need to bring unity among our selves the diaspora before we don anything. So we were able to do that we have one organization you understand in Europe, and we have already done that and now Bengoma is trying to organize Liberian Madingo convention, Liberian Madingo in Europe. That will be in August. So that is one thing if we can do that, then we can also put our hands together and also put some pressue on the Liberian government to do one or twe things like peace building and lot of things. And some other things now Liberia is not like before. I think if you go to any ministry you will seMadingo or moslims everywhere..

*Uhmmm*

But tribalisme will never, never, never finish you understand, let just ….. its not going to be a war between….

*I didn’t ask to finish tribalisme, i just want to know what is your role in making the peace!!!*

First of all, that what’s I was saying, trying to put ourselves together as European Madingo, European Liberian Madingo and found the organization called (EFLA). We have already done that, we also try to pressure on towards nationlity, some other things to build that.

*Uhmm*

Bengoma is also found, trying to have a federation now convention, Liberian Madingo Association in Europe here. We are tryng to organize that from August. Maybe from there we will be able to get some plans where and what we can do in Liberia.

*Uhmm. Ehhmmm, can you tell me about the functionning of Bengoma? How is it functioning? For example the structure, and how does it exist . Do you understand what I mean?*

Before I come to that I would like to add something about question on our involvement in peacebuilding..

*Uhmm, oke*

You know, we have a lof of propositions on that, but propositions you know when take proposition and the proposition never happen and never come in light it always remain a proposition. So those are things that we started here, we do a lot of things, even last fews years we had an election about LAH issue, we fully contribute in organizing that election. The Liberian Embassy was even here. The Liberian embassy from Belgium we invite here, we take everything , we take all the initiative to organize those things to make sure that we are all the same, we are all Liberians. It is like I told you, if it is about Liberia for that we don’t have those issues. As our brother said your culture is your culture, your religion is your religion we can’t change that, but if its about country we are all Liberians no body can change that. So we have been working very hard for that you know, to do something about that to rebuild and to make people forget about the past, what ever was has happend during the war and to focus on the forward. Because the war has finished let us come united as one and rebuild our country back again.

*Uhmm*

So to through this we have take a lot of initiatives, but we find out that one person is one person we need to involve other people. We are here in the Netherlands we are one of the organizations, Liberian organizations which is very active in Europe, one of the oldest organizations and one of the active organization in Europe if it is the matter about Liberian organizations. So what we decide to do now, we decide to organize the convention which will take place in August , so the whole Liberian Madingo in Europe will come together in August, that convention will take us a three day program from Friday to Sunday. So from there we have a lot of plans and lot of initiatives, but I will not go forward on that, I just want to tell you what is our plan. So we are trying to organize that to show our project to our brothers and other sister organizations in Europe, fort hem to know what is our plan and initiatives, what we want to do. For them and for all of us to join and ehmmehhmm for those projects to go forward.

*Uhmmokee*

So that is the big proposition we take and that will take place in August. I think if you look at it in social media on the net, the publication is already on the site now. So those are the initiatives we take, so from there our propositions we take we can introduce it to our brothers there and we can see better how we can fund that.

*Okee, and do you also have contact with ehmm other organizations like the Guineans or Sierra Leoneans? Are you working together or are you sharing expertise with them, you understand what I mean?*

Yes of course, that is logic I can just say that our organization that is all about you know ehhmm. We are Africans, we are all Africans, ehmm one that we always if you look at our things how we do it, first what we do, we focus first on the whole west Africa. We never even say that for Liberia or tribe, we get Madingo that’s it, we focus on the whole West Africa. So for that thing you should know first Madingo is a language, the whole West Africa you can find Madingo. Yeah we find out we Madingo from Liberia, but there is also Madingo from another country. Where are dose people?

*I think maybe you didn’t understand my question. Beside the Madingo I mean do you have contact or ehmm with other organizations, like the Sierra Leoneans and Guineans, because you have a lot of diaspora organizations here. You understand what I mean?*

I make it short, even last Saturday our brothers Guineans were having a big Daawa (lezing) in Amsterdam no in Rotterdam sorry, so our organization were there. One of our members were invited to join that program. So we have a fully contact with other organization here , like the Guinean organizations, Ghanian organizations, Sierra Leonean organizations at the mosque so you it by yourself….So those our neighbour countries we have fully communication with them, any active any program we are always together. Our brohter from Ghana is also here, he introduced himself in the beginning. So I don’t want to go far but it’s evidence to you that the person who do the interview to know we are fully contact with neighbour countries.

*Uhmm, okee*

You know Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea you can’t differentiate those countries, you understand hé, you know that for sure. We all join one organization called Mano River Union you understand?

*Uhmm*

Liberians and Sierra Leoneans are all together, we are in contact with all…

*I mean maybe you could have a platform where you meet and share information, experience or expertise with those organizations, this is the thing I mean, not just having contact wit individuals.*

Yes, we have contact sometimes like when they have big gathering, for example when political leaders come they always invite us, especially me. They always call ooh Sherif come we have an event some politicians are coming or if they have barbecue that is outing they always inform us.

*Uhmm, okee. What about Dutch organizations?*

Uhmm, what do you mean about Dutch organizations? If we have contact with them

*Yeah, if you have contact with them or if you recieve help from them, for example?*

Yeah, no we, we have been asking lot of organizations we get some ahhahh other Dutch organizations, but we don’t get any help from them, but we are collaborating we are communicating with other issues, anything concerns about the Netherlands, our children schorlaship, about the language and our integration. We work with them together to solve the problems and make things possible for our organization. So, up to now we need to add more contact with other organizations, because even every one or two month we visit someone from other organization who will come and introduce ourself to the organization, make sure that we have contact and take up plans for the coming future. We always add that.

*Okee, what about the Dutch government is it doing something to involve you in peacebuilding? Do you know or recognize something that you think, yeah that is giving you the opportunity to involve in peacebuilding or …?*

Uhmm, from now you understand yes, but not exactly Bengoma. That is why we have Liberian organization (LAH), if there is anything for nation or for government, first of all we pay attention to the Liberian Association, you understand? The LAH, if there is anything any information about peacebuilding or other things we always go thorugh LAH. Bengoma is well organized and registered in this country, but at least to keep our culture, that was our aim, to keep our culture our own religion.

*Uhmm, okee. Are you also doing something to improve the integration process of Liberian diaspora? Are you doing something about that?*

We already done that, you understand? Most of our children.. from now eighty per cent they are all Dutch citizens. So we also have a lot of things to integrate to the society.

*What are the challenges are you… ehmm do you think Bengoma is encountering sofar? Do have any challenges concerning Financial or the collaboration or uniting you community together, what do you think? What are the most challenges are you facing sofar?*

Yeah, hahahahahaha, lack of Financial resources is always the number one, as I just say come from.. heemBengoma just get that mosque just bring people together and keep our religion…

*That mosque is for Bengoma?*

Yeah, yeah is for Bengoma, but now the mosque is getting small for us, we need a big place. So we even try to get that big place now because the members are getting high and we getting plenty, and the mosque get a few years ago we can’t… it is too small for us. So if you ask me that question, the Financial issue is always the number one.

*How did you get the Financial resources? How did you finance the mosque or the education project in Liberia?*

All these have been supported by the individual members. The member fees.

*Are you not writing project proposals and ask for funds?*

We have done that once. Through our former Bengoma president (AmadouKoroma), who live UK wright now. He was here last Friday and he prayed with us. He has lead us too to ask funds from the company where he is working. Though we get contact and ask funds from that company. They also helped us during Ebola time with Financial, to help our brothers who have difficulties in Liberia.

*Okee, my final question concerns the imam. Imam do you have anything to add, becuase the religion is also playing an important role to bring people together and maintain peace? What do you do in your own part?*

Yeah, I am an activist, mostly activist, and been an activist, you have to you know bring your background as my brother Sherif said. We have keep our culture and religion. So I am using these two things to promote peace, you know and create harmony among humanity. So I am lobbying my activism to network Bengoma in other not fall in the trap like before, you know during the war time. If somebody is not there to be able to lobby to balance things, you know things might get out of hands. So my part here is been a neutral from Ghana among Madingo community, I think ehhm my work is to be able to make sure we don’t go too extreem. Becuase when you go extreem that’s why the problems comes, so I am trying to shape with my little experience on activism, because I outreach also outside. I try to bring my network to where ever I think peace can be worth and be hold.

*Uhmm*

And ehmm as I am telling you now, yesterday I gave a card to a military officer of defense because we want to invite him to join our Iftar (ccutting fast). He is working for the multicultural defense, so I met him during an event in Amsterdam and asked him, would you like to come to our community, to come and brake Iftar with us. so these are some of the networks that have to do.. and he work under defense which means on peace issue right? So these are the of imam that I think the imam should also you know stand up from its comfort zone and outreach ehhm the community…… to be able and I am talking to the coordinator wright now so that we can also invite their (wijk agent), and we have to know him, and break Iftar with him. So this is the work of imam beside leading the prayers and teaching. I don’t want us to be labeled as we are only feeding the community with only religious perceptions, you know. We have to come to the social side also. So that is what I think and we are on social media. I see it as my responsibility to intervene in human affairs.

*Are there many activists within the Bengoma community?*

Maybe they are there, but they don’t call themselves activists. You know me I am just using my religieus values and principles to influence people’s behavior.

*Yes, that is also another good approach to participate in peacebuilding. Okke, to conclude could you (the coördinator) tell me the most successful project Bengoma have achieved so far?*

Yes, two things. First of all we are proud of the education projects. Secondly, we were able to influence the Dutch government in recognizing and accepting the Liberian Mandingo as political asylumseekers, as a result ninety-nine per cent of Liberian Mandingo have the Dutch nationality now.

*Okee, we have finished, and I would like to thank you again for your cooperation and answering my questions. Thanks !!!!*

You are welcome.

### Appendix 7: Interview Transcript – CCoLA

Interview transcript with Joseph (CCoLA)

Leiden, 18 April 2017

*Thank you Mr. Joseph for having time with me, and as you seen my research proposal, could you tell me about your organization eeemm how are you structured, what is your eeehhhm vision and mission?*

Ehhm, ehhm. Thank you for your interview, my name is Joseph C and I am from Cameroun. And I am the founder and director of the Centre of Collective Learning and Action (CCoLA). It’s an organization which is register since 2013 at the Chamber of Commerce, and what we try to do is to build communities. Ehhmm this is what we do building communities strengthening communities, strengthening collective the capability to working together. Because what we saw in the Netherlands and ehhm also nowadays there is a need a use need to work together to work collectively to strengthen the capacity of working together. Is like football team when you can have individual professional people having a lot of talent, but while coming together working in a team, that you can realize that they are failing..

*Uhhm*

Eehmm, and while the same time they are lucky they have a lot of talents. That is what we saw in the Netherlands, that there are lot of diaspora organizations that have capacities and a lot of talents and are not able to work together. Ehhmm you can see in terms of diaspora organizations, but you can also see at the level of the community and at the level of organizations, you have different people working for the same organization, but if they are not able to work together they will face challenges, identify the challenges of working together, it will be hard to achieve a common goal.

*Uhhm. Ok, if I understand your aim is to ehmm to gather talented people so that you can work together to build communities?*

Uhhm. Ja, strengthening ehhmm strengthening communities, ehmm to achieve their goal. Giving and providing communities the possibilities and tools…Ehhhmm to achieve their goal, who commit themselves already to work together. Then our CCoLA is it eeehmm in itself this kind of communities of professionals we would like to see also in practice, applied also in the society

*Eehhm, okee. Which sector then? Because you have many ehhehhm talented professionals in different fields.*

No what we saw in the past there are lot tentative of bringing diaspora together, but eehhm if there is no team which is able to bring diaspora together this idea of bringing people together will fail also. And, that means there is really a need to have a kind of thematically approach. Like for example we did what humanitarian disaster ehhm, eeehm in the field of humanitarian disaster….What for example happened with Ebola you can see that there is lot of countries evolve affected by this, but not all the diaspora organizations are working in the field of humanitarian disaster. Then if you create a kind of Construction that you have bring together organizations interested in the field of humanitarian disaster. Then that means coming back to your question, humanitarian disaster is one of theme were working on.

*Uhhumm, eehmm.*

And the theme were are developing within CCoLA, ehhm really the theme eehm created by organizations or a lot of different organizations willing to learn or improve their capacities in different themes. Then ehhm humanitarian disaster came for example. We have social Enterprises, we have ehhm, ehhmehhmm now the social cohesion.. Social cohesion is another theme, ehhm we have organizational development that is also another theme that means that professionals from different organisations willing to create a kind of cooperative ehmm, community of practice in other to learn from their all practices. That means in the field of health, for example we created a community of practices of medical professional in Guinea.

*Uhhmm, uhhmm*

That is what is going on now.

*Uhhm*

Eehmm, then we are what is characterized CCoLA is more the method, how to go with the topic, how to go with the issue that the issue with itself. That means we are open we can discuss we can approach, even peacebuilding that is what we also interested in. Ehhmm, ehhmm we have a professional doctor who is specialized in the field of peacebuilding and migration, but we don’t have ehhmm we don’t target the issue itself yet.

*Uhhmm, ok. Do you also do something about peace education for example?*

Not yet no.

*Uhmm ok.*

Alright, ya. You can see ehhmehhmm, yaya what ya peace what is really peace héehhm, because last time for example I organized ehhm training in Guinee ehhm that is related to conflict management. Ehmm you can see that you can create you can have ehhmm a different kind of ehhm conflict and ehmm a conflict is already a sign of ehmm. Where there is a conflict you will also need a peace he. And there is different kind of, maybe what you are speaking, about I don’t know maybe you are speaking about peacebuilding, peace after war, what is the result after conflict.Ehhmm. It can be what I saw for example ehhm that there are ehhmm, conflict with related conflict, that means conflict is created y ehmm technics. Ehhmhow waste is manage in a country.Ehhm you can have people, you can have conflict even within organization. Ehhm just because of the way all the colleagues are managing the waste, you can have different kind of conflict due to political reason.

*Uhhmm, yeah or community dispute*

Exactly, exactly, then we conduct, because we are working in the field of waste management, we also realized that there are lot of conflict for example present in Guinee due to the practice of waste, waste management. I don’t know if it is directly related to what you are speaking. But we also saw ehhm, because I was the one, I gave this training. Is that really ehhm this is the kind of conflict we are not thinking about, but there are because of the practice how waste is manage now.Its create already ehhm, ehhmm, ehhm there a conflict open conflict even ehh between for example the hospital in the neighborhood and the community, eehmm the hospital and the community. Ehhm the waste was really the source of the conflict, but this such of conflict could also be internally how people goes with procedures of having going with waste ehhmehmm ja I will say that it’s really a source of conflict.

*Ok. And ehhmm how big is your organization, how is it structured? Do you have ehhm many partners or which diaspora organizations are you working with? How?*

Uhhmm, ya within our organization I think we are now about ehhm 12 consultant, we have now 2 interns. They are traveling I think in May to Sierra Leone. We have two Young professionals and we have a board, but that is really the organization itself ehhm from within. We have different kind of partnership you can divide into ehhmm project partnership. That means that, if for example we are organizing an event we look for an origination with whom we can partner with to organize this event. That is for example we have ehhm, ehhmm, this are incidental partnership. For example with African Study Centre or with ehmm MFS the Max van de Stoel Foundation, but we also have founding partnership, that means that ehhmehmmehhm organization providing us the funds to realize the

realize the projects, ya our main funders are now the municipality and Dutch government, we also have alliances ehmm that means that organizations with in order to ehhmehhm to implement specific projects we design the project together that is how we can for example ask our local partners take the Constructions we are created with diaspora organizations or ehhm other Dutch organizations like i-plus Solutions. Then it depending on the field, that is how we created our partnership*.*

*Uhhmm, I would still like to go back to the first ehhmm where you said that your aim is to bring diaspora professionals together?*

Yeah, yeah

*Ehhmm, how have you been successful in that? Have you reached a lot of diaspora in the Netherlands because yah?*

Yeah, I mean ehhmmm bringing organizations together or bringing professionals together needs to eehhm you need to create something for them is not just coming here, because I know that at the end of the day they have to pay their bill.

*Uhhmm, yeah*

Then we have to create projects, we have to create projects for them. We have to create, we have to identify the theme in which we can bring them together to develop projects proposals.

*Uhhmm*

To be honest I am the one now saying we have to stop, because there are lot, a lot, a lot and a lot of people coming in now. And the board of CCoLA decide to say ok we can start with what we have now. Ehhmm, to be able to manage what we have, otherwise it will be very difficult to be able to manage. Let me say the concept is very good, ehhmm the concept is ehhmm the more we are we are getting matured the concept is well understood and people are coming in.

*That means people are aware of CCoLA activities? Did I say it right?*

Yes

*And diaspora organizations are aware of what you are doing, and there are lot of people who are interested in it?*

Yeah, yeah

*Ehhmm, you said you doing projects in Guinea, are you also active in Liberia? Have you been there, or?*

Not yet, not yet, we are ehhmm. I expect ehhmm some, I submit already two projects proposals for Liberia and Guinee. I hope that as soon as the projects are approved we will be able to go there. And the projects are in the field of waste management and the relation to help health care.

*Oke, and do you encounter any challenges during ehhmm since you started this organization? Ehhm have encounter any challenges that are burdening you or impeding you to fulfill your projects?*

Yeah, I think the challenge I face ehhmm is also the challenges faced by a lot of diaspora organizations. Ehhmm, first the recognition,

*Recognition?*

Yeah, that means an ehhmm doing a lot of jobs in order to be ehhm, you have to speak to or work hard in order to have the trust of the people of the funds. Ehmm that is one. The second is ehhmm a most of the time diaspora organizations are very small and the criteria designed by funds are very high.

Ehhmm, that means we are not as diaspora organizations, you are not allowed to apply to a lot of funds. Okeehmm the other could be for example, and because we could not apply that means that professionals working with you, ehhm have to find another way to, to, to raise some funds. And ehhhm wat I saw also with a lot of diaspora organizations is really this difficulty to work together. And the reason the why I created CCoLA was that I saw that, I assume that in order to have diaspora organized there is a need to have a kind of organizations playing facilitating the role of organizing things, bringing people together and organizing things.And taking the first responsibility to have things done.

*Uhumm*

And if there is no organization having this feeling or yah the process will start and starting, and starting again. And most of the time for example in the field of disaster, you will see that after a disaster we continue doing this things. Unfortunately we can’t stop disaster, but we can at least organize ourselves to intervene during disaster

*Exactly, or to solve things after disaster, you can come together and prepare for post disaster!!*

Yeah, yeah post disaster, even you can start even organizing yourself by saying if there is a disaster in this country, how can you deal with that. I think that is one of ehhmm, yeah when I was speaking organizing diaspora organizations according to the themes, that is one of the issue CCoLA is doing, is preparing to do in the next coming month.Working in the field of humanitarian disaster how to prepare how to go with disasters, for example what happen now with the farming in Ethiopia, Liberia no, Sudan, Mali, Somalia North Nigeria, and North Cameroun. We planning to organize diaspora from those affected countries in other to provide collective response.

*Uhumm, oke. Among the people that are now in your organization or partners, is there or there is no Liberian individuals or organizations among, or Guinean or Sierra Leonean?*

No, no. In migration Construction against Ebola, ehmm we founded during the Ebola disaster.It was only about organizations from this countries, we have Liberians, we have Sierra Leoneans and we have Kenyans.

*Diaspora that are here?*

Yeah.

*Just for that project?*

Yeah, just for that project.

*Uhumm. Oke. What are your most successful projects so far? Maybe you have or you can name some?*

Yeah I will say the possible reaction, is how we organize our self during the Ebola disaster. I think, ehmm and CCoLA it seems how we organized really diaspora during the Ebola disaster, it is really one of the project that we are very proudly speaking about, is how we organized diaspora, we document the collective effort we we organized ehhmm awareness meetings, we do a lot of lobby and now also we are conducting project in Sierra Leone and Guinee.We are continuing that.

*Uhumm, yah. And how can Liberian NGOs make benefit of your services more in future?*

Uhumm, ehhmm, we have the expertise already, in a different field you can just contact us. And we can make use of our expertise, and we are also developing our website so that their knowledge are available for all these organizations willing to…Ehmmm, we are making our website so that if they have an event , they can make use of our website, for example to post their event and make their event known. Eehhm, eeehm if their professionals are there they can join us during our poll of consultancy meetings. Because in our regular meetings we have the learning part where we learn from a specific issue. For example the last time we learn about the importance about the gamification. Gamification meaning playing by learning, eehh yah, other people working diaspora this is really an open discussion open issue that can of might interest a lot of people.

*Ok. And do you have any suggestions for Liberian diaspora in terms of eeeh improving their engagement in the field of social development or peacebuilding in Liberia?*

Eehhm, what I see in general is a really, eehm it was also assessed during the construction, the migrant Construction Ebola is really this capability of working together, is too weak, is very weak. And I can see that people from Sierra Leone are better organized. You could have seen that for example during this Ebola disaster. But I really don’t know how far, I saw, I could see the different how Sierra Leoneans are organized and how Liberians. Sierra Leonean are better organized than the Liberians. And that effect, the level of the organizations of these organization influence also the collective of work their producing collectively. Their work and what they are doing is not same. And they are not strengthening each other that is really a pity.

*Ok. Well I think we should stop here. We come to an end of this interview. I would like to thank you again for having time for me and answering the questions.*

You are welcome.