Distant Peace or Peace at a Distance?

Westafrican (Diaspora) Youth and Peacebuilding in a Global Era

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Preface

When I started with the big process called 'graduating' I had a lot of dreams and wishes, but I had never expected that so many of them would come true. The past year in which I have been working on this research has been a period full of new experiences, positive developments and full of learning moments for me as a person and as a researcher. I am very grateful for that.

The most valuable development for me is that my research has become linked to several practical events and developments, even before it was finished. I have always wanted to contribute to positive developments with any research and I think this research has that potential. The seeds of the research were sown during the African Students Conference 2003 where I came into contact with the United Network Of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY). Via them I could participate in the training conference in Freetown where I came into contact with many motivated youth leaders. This lead to my involvement with the MRU (Mano River Union) Peace Caravan in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea which was organised in November 2004 by two of the organisations present in Freetown: the MRU youth parliament and the West African Youth Network (WAYN). Another product related to the research was made for the African Students Conference 2004 in the form of a video documentary about ideas of African Diaspora youth (which I made together with Sahro Mohammed and Caterina Argenti). Hopefully the findings of the research will also be useful for the development of a youth programme within Afroneth Foundation in which I will be involved after the finishing of this research.

All these developments could not have happened without the support of several very important people whom I would like to thank. First of all the staff of Unoy Peacebuilders who gave me the first motivation to do something with the theme of youth and who allowed me to participate in the training conference in Freetown and supported me throughout the process. Secondly, Hassan Jalloh from Afroneth Foundation. He has helped me with a lot of contacts in the Diaspora field and has given me input for my research and motivated me whenever I needed that. I also would like to thank all the young people that talked to me, as well in the Diaspora as during the conference in Freetown and the MRU peace caravan, who shared their projects and ideas with me and who inspired me to really believe in the potential of youth.

Last but not least I would like to thank my supervisors Jolle Demmers and Gerd Junne who guided me through the process and gave me the necessary and valuable feedback. Special thanks goes to Eric Ansah who has been at the start of this process and who has supported me throughout.

Thank you all!

<div style="text-align: right">Rozemarijn van West, Utrecht, January 2005</div>

Summary

The main aim of this research is to analyse the role of youth from Liberia and Sierra Leone in peacebuilding processes in their home countries, whereby including youth living in the Diaspora (Netherlands). Both Sierra Leone and Liberia are recovering from years of civil conflict in which both societies were completely disrupted. The research puts special focus on the relationship between youth that have fled to the West and youth in the home country and the effects of globalisation on the level of transnationalism of youth in the Diaspora.

The focus on youth has been chosen as youth can be seen as potentially important actors in the reconstruction-process of a wartorn country. Arguments to base this supposition on are the fact that youth are going to be the future society (cliché but true) and that their inclusion in the peacebuilding process is an important condition for ensuring the sustainability of the fragile peace in the two countries. In both countries youth constitute the majority of the population and many of them feel they have the right to participate in decision-making processes, as it is their future at stake. Generally youth are not regarded as positive actors by authorities but are rather marginalized. Also in the academic world youth have gotten little attention.

Generally speaking the life of African youth are characterised by paradoxes and transition. They find themselves in a transition from tradition to modernity in which they have to balance between traditional African values in which youth were subordinated to the elders, and the autonomy of modern youth. Through globalisation processes they increasingly have access to images of modern lifestyles of Western countries while at the same time they remain excluded from these opportunities and prosperity. Economic decline, bad leadership and protracted conflicts on the African continent confront African youth with a lack of opportunities in almost all spheres of life.

These hardships have motivated some youth to become active in peacebuilding- or youth-organisations and to contribue to building a better future. At the same time becoming part of a peacebuilding- or youth-organisation provides the youth in the home country with a new identity and can open up new opportunities. The many training-conferences organised by international NGO's allow them to travel all over Africa and to meet other young people. However, the fact that youth are 'moving' and dynamic by nature makes it difficult to set up sustainable youth structures that build on existing initiatives. The difficulties of finding funds for their projects is another challenge and can create competition between youth groups and can make them dependent on government support; especially where they aim to be included in decisionmaking processes. Despite these challenges there is a small group of very motivated and active youth, both boys and girls, who are well informed and aware of

the situation in their country and the rest of the world and are actively contributing to conflict resolution and the rebuilding of their society. Even though these groups are small, they have an important function in motivating other youths to become part of society as they have the ability to motivate and stimulate peers.

When looking at the Diaspora youth we see quite a different picture. Where the role of peace-builders opens up new opportunities for the home country youth, the search for opportunities pushes Diaspora youth towards their life in the Diaspora instead of engaging themselves with peacebuilding in the home country. Diaspora communities could play an important role in peacebuilding in their home country through eg. remittances or organised community support and with the improved communication technologies their 'transnationalism' is even expected to grow. The actual contribution of the Diaspora organisations (mostly constituted of young men) from Sierra Leone and Liberia to the peacebuilding process in their home countries is very little though. Their organisations are relatively new and are still struggling with a lack of organisation, resources and division within the communities. Additionally they have little knowledge on the exact situation in the home country, despite improved communication technologies.

Apart from these external circumstances the research points to internal factors that reveal a more complex situation causing the lack of engagement of Diaspora youth. Although many of the youth express a willingness to contribute to the development of their home country, they all have conditions that keep them from actually translating this willingness into action. They first want to acquire some education and only want to return if they have something to offer. In other words: they want to achieve something in the West in order to be able to live up to the high expectations of the people at home. Going abroad is an important rite de passage for young men and is seen as a way to make your fortune, also for involuntary migrants. These expectations stand in sharp contrast with the actual harsh reality of most migrants in the West, including these youth. They are severely hampered by the long and difficult legal procedures and consequently have a poor economic and social status, struggling at the margins of society. Despite these constraints in the hostcountry they still see more chances for themselves in the Diaspora then in the shattered home country and the perceived lack of opportunities in the home country functions as a strong pushfactor. The attachment to the home country remains, but it is far more the symbolic importance then an actual longing for return.

The distance between Diaspora and home country is also reflected in the relationship between the youth at home and those in the Diaspora. Because of a lack of contact both groups are guided by misperceptions and distrust about the capabilities of the other group. The youth in the Diaspora have very low estimations of the capacity of the home country youth. They see them as lacking exposure and experience being and in need of incentives from outside. The Diaspora youth differentiate themselves positively from them through their experiences abroad while the home country youth are actually more active and better informed. The home country youth in turn have an ambivalent position towards the youth

in the Diaspora: generally they are disappointed about the fact that so few people that left the country come back to help their home country and that returnees rather show off instead of using their acquired wealth for the sake of the community. Even if they do set up projects they often impose their ideas on the local communities instead of asking what is needed. On the other hand they think the Diaspora could be of great help, especially because of the big financial impetus they expect from the returnees. These unrealistic high expectations result from a lack of information on the actual situation of immigrants in the West.

Cooperation could be very useful as the two groups can complement each other very well: the youth groups in the home country know the exact situation on the ground and what is needed; the Diaspora can share its knowledge and experience learned in the West and, if supported, open up networks with Western organisations and the broader Diaspora. However, the lack of communication and the resulting distrust for now stand in the way of partnerships between the two groups.

Despite the globalisation forces that are believed to bridge the 'emotional' distance between Diaspora communities and their country of origin with the help of transport and communication technologies, the distance between Diaspora and home country youth appears not only to be physical. Also socially and emotionally the migration has caused a distance. The fact that the Diaspora youth are part of a refugee community obstructs the possibilities for transnational linkages. Even though communication technologies open up new opportunities for the youth, their marginal position does not allow them to make full use of these possibilities. Additionally that the quest for opportunities makes the two groups chose for different worlds and the distance between those worlds can not easily been bridged.

But even though the actual contribution of Diaspora youth is limited, the research does recognize a potential in youth to contribute to peacebuilding processes in their country. The fact that youth are more open to change than older generations is especially of vital interest in a world where the pace of (technological) developments is very high. Youth are the ones who can connect their societies to the global technological developments. Even though they may have less experience and knowledge then the older generation, it is only through the inclusion of the young generation in the shaping of society now, that they can learn to be responsible citizens and leaders for the future. In the recommendations guidelines are given on how to harness the potential of the youth and how to bridge the distance between Diaspora and home country.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Youth are the promise of any society. They are going to be the future leaders. Cliché, but nevertheless an undeniable truth. By acknowledging this fact it is amazing how little attention is given to the potentials of youth. They are generally rather a forgotten category or perceived as a threat to the status quo in society then that they are carefully educated and prepared for their future tasks. This is especially true in the African context where youth are often bereft of most of their basic rights due to dwindling economies or protracted civil conflicts.

Children and women are generally considered to be the groups in societies that are most affected by the disruption and atrocities of violent conflict. Youth take a more contested position in this regard. They are just like children victims of the conflict and the first group to be hit by the disruption of educational, economic and health provisions; however they are also more and more to be found as perpetrators within rebel groups and warring parties. Child soldiers have become the face of many recent civil wars on the African continent and young men are considered to be the motor of conflicts. As a result youth generally are perceived as victims or perpetrators; not as potential actors for positive change.

However, youth have a great potential for positive social change. Some of them can already be found in peacebuilding activities and movements advocating for non-violent conflict resolution. The role of youth in this movement deserves special attention, as the negative role of youth in conflicts is generally the dominant discourse while it is an expression of the same energy and dynamism that gives youth also the potential to be positive actors of change in their society. Youth feeling the obligation to contribute to transforming conflicts in a peaceful way should be highly valued as they are important stakeholders in the longterm success of the peaceprocess, especially in societies where they constitute the majority of the population.

AIMS

In this research I want to draw attention to the role of youth as active agents in transforming the societies they live in. The main aim is to analyse the potential of African youth from Liberia and Sierra Leone (Diaspora and home country) to contribute to peacebuilding in their homecountries. This will be done in the context of a 'globalising' world as the growing interconnectedness of the world especially influences young people and their position in this world as well as the peacebuilding processes in post-conflict areas. This is partly due to the rapid development of communication technologies that provide youth in Africa with access to images, ideas and knowledge from outside their own environment. However,

another important effect of globalisation is the formation of Diaspora communities. Especially 'refugee' Diasporas have a high percentage of young men that live in a different environment with different opportunities compared to their peers back home. The increased attention for Diaspora communities has shown that Diaspora communities can have an important role in influencing the reconstruction of their home country through economic flows but also through sending ideas and knowledge. Little is known though about the specific contribution of African youth living in the Diaspora, in this case the Netherlands. In fact even the question of youth in general in Africa is 'huge and under-explored'.[1] Young people can be a source of energy and new ideas, but up to now the category of 'youth' seems not to be recognised by other actors in society nor by the academic world.

RELEVANCE

More knowledge on the contributions and potential of African youth in peacebuilding can be used to formulate practical recommendations about how their work can be supported and made more effective. This is relevant for all actors involved in building peace in post conflict areas. The involvement of Diaspora youth in reconstructionprocesses back home can be a highly needed incentive there and could also have positive effects on the hostcountry. If youth in the Diaspora are motivated to acquire knowledge while being abroad and will be supported to use that back home, they can be an alternative way of 'development cooperation' for the Dutch government. This fits in the current trend whereby attention is given to the positive aspects of migration. Diaspora communities not only support their home country through remittances, they also have a lot of knowledge and experience about their home country, which could be of interest for development cooperation policies. Facilitating Diaspora support to the home country could also have positive effects on voluntary return, one of the most problematic issues in the Dutch asylum policies.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The central question of this research is the following:

> What is the role of youth from Sierra Leone and Liberia (Diaspora and home country) in peacebuilding processes in their home country?

This main question entails different components. The first question to start with is whether youth contribute at all to peacebuilding processes and if so how and why. If not, what are the reasons for that? The second dimension of the research question is the relationship between youth in the Diaspora and youth at the African continent. The research will look at the perceptions they have of each other and their ideas about cooperation between youth in the Diaspora and youth in the homecountries. Out of these different components the

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[1] A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002.

research will conclude with recommendations on how the potential of the youth can be harnessed and how their contributions can be improved. For specified research questions see appendices(1).

RESEARCH METHODS

General

This explorative research will use qualitative methods to gain more knowledge about the role of African youth in peacebuilding in their homecountries. Hereby an inductive approach will be used in which the findings/outcomes of the research will lead to some empirical generalisations. For more detailed research methods see appendices (2).

Where

Most of the research will take place in existing situations: fieldwork in The Netherlands will be taking place in the field of activities of the Diaspora organisations. This will mainly be in the bigger cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam where the biggest Diaspora organisations are based. Fieldwork will also be done in Sierra Leone at the face-to-face training seminar 'Youth transforming conflict' for Westafrican youth leaders organised by United Network of Young Peacebuilders (Unoy Peacebuilders) and the Network University (Amsterdam) in April 2004 in Freetown (for more information see page 28 and appendices(6)). Even though this is not really a natural environment, this conference brings together a lot of youth that are interesting for this research and who will be interviewed. Apart from the conference some observations will be gathered from youth or organisations operating from Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone. Additionally I will use my experiences from working with the Mano River Union youth parliament in Conakry (Guinea) and Sierra Leone. In October and November 2004 I worked together with them in Conakry to organise a Peace Caravan through the Mano River Union (Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, for more info see page 30).

When

The research will take place in the period between February and January 2005. The conference in Freetown will take place from 18–29 April 2004 and the Peace Caravan in November 2004.

Who

The subjects of this research are youth aged between 18–30 from Sierra Leone and Liberia living in their home country and in The Netherlands and who are already active in peace-building activities through Diaspora organisations or youth organisations in the home country. The youth from the homecountries will be selected from the participants of the training-conference on conflict transformation in Sierra Leone. The youth from the Diaspora will be selected through Diaspora organisations from the two countries that are based in the Netherlands.

How

This research will work with several qualitative research methods to obtain the information aimed for. As this research is working with two settings, namely the Diaspora community in The Netherlands and the training-conference for Westafrican youthleaders in Sierra Leone, it would be necessary to use the same methods to make a comparison between these two settings. However, there are several practical reasons why this is not possible. Because of lack of financial means, time and security reasons no fieldwork can be done in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Therefore the part of the home country youth will be restricted to the training-conference in Freetown. This makes it impossible to use a strictly comparative design. Rather the use of two groups can be seen as a multiple-case study, to give a broader image of how youth are contributing to peacebuilding than when focusing on just one case. Also the use of the two groups will enable an investigation of the relationship between these two groups.

To describe the contribution to peacebuilding of youth from the Dutch Diasporacommunities of Sierra Leone and Liberia I will carry out fieldwork. Fieldwork is in this case the best way for describing and explaining the behaviour and ideas of the youth studied, as it entails the involvement of the researcher in the field and social life of these people. Methodical triangulation will be used to ensure that the different aspects of the field will be covered. The different methods used will be participant observation, survey and existing data.

To analyse the activities of youth living and acting in their home country, the research is mainly restricted to the survey-method. Through questionnaires and interviews the activities and motivations of these youth will be investigated, in the same way as the Diaspora group. At the conference there will be the possibility of participant observation to some extent, but it is important to note that this is not the natural environment of these youth. If time allows some fieldwork will be done in Freetown by visiting organisations and young peacebuilders. To account for the lack of fieldwork the selected cases for in depth interview will be ideally youth that work with an existing organisation from which can be checked that they have actually organised and executed some activities.

Chapter 2. Conflict analysis

Civil conflict in the Manu River Union

Both Sierra Leone and Liberia have witnessed an extremely brutal and dehumanising civil war from more then 10 years in which civilians have become the major victims, suffering from chaos, poverty, violence and cruel abuses. It is clear that the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia are strongly connected and that also Guinea as unwilling host to hundreds of thousands of refugees has been affected by the conflicts. National borders have little value for rebelgroups and often combatants shift from their original rebelgroup to groups in neighbouring countries once the conflict in their own country has come to an end. This is why the Mano River Union, constituted by Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, will be the focus region of this research. Because Guinea did not actually enter in civil conflict it will not play a major role in the research.

The three countries of the Mano River Union: Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea.
Source: ReliefWeb, 7 November 2000.

THE CONFLICT IN LIBERIA[1]

The conflict in Liberia started in 1989, but was a response to almost 150 years of governance that was characterized by patronage and discrimination of the indigenous people by the settlers, the repatriated slaves from America for whom Liberia was founded in 1847. These Americo-Liberians ruled the country until 1980 and dominated in all spheres of life. Indigenous people had to adopt Americo-Liberian names if they wanted to have any chance on education or employment. President Tolbert who became president in 1971 tried to unify the country by appointing an indigenous vice president but this was not accepted by the rest of his party members. This angered the indigenes who felt that they were being marginalized and used as canon folders by the Americo-Liberian ruling class.

Tolbert was killed in a bloody coup the morning of 12th April 1980 in circumstances that are still doubtful. The coup leader, Samuel K. Doe, used the Americo-Liberian versus countryman/indigene issue to win support for his coup. He and his fellow coupists accused the Tolbert regime of tribalism, but Samuel K. Doe soon turned out to be equally corrupt and intolerant and tribalism became a central theme of his brutal and repressive regime. After a failed coup to get rid of Doe by people who were mainly Gio and Mano people, these tribes suffered heavily under attacks and were slaughtered by the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), whose ranks Doe had filled with many of his own Krahn tribesmen. Many Gio and Mano people had to flee the country and bundled themselves with Americo-Liberians in the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) in Ivory Coast. With the backing of Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Libya, the NPFL began its war in December 1989, headed by Charles Taylor, a dismissed civil servant from Does regime.

The war, which began as a popular uprising, soon took an ethnic character with the Gio and Mano constituting one group while the Krahn and Mandingo (rebelgroup Ulimo) formed the other party. Mano-Gio perceptions of the Mandingo alliance with the Doe regime put Mandingos in the category of the enemy at the time of the attempted 1985 coup. After the failed coup attempt, the Mandingos were accused of complicity in the anti-Mano/Gio witch hunting. Other problems relating to the origins of these two groups living mainly in Nimba county are also said to be reason for their opposition during the war. The Mandingo people migrated from surrounding countries like Guinea to Liberia, from the 17th till the 20th century. They settled among other peoples as traders and rulers, often taking women from them. Some of the earlier Mandingo were culturally absorbed by the people they ruled, but by the late nineteenth century, most of the Mandingo were Muslims, and their religion and occupation set them apart from the people among whom they lived. Among other things, Islam precluded their participation in those peoples' central institutions, Poro and Sande (male and female secret societies).

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[1] Sources: – S. Kpanbayeazee Duworko, *Liberia: a backgrounder*, Department of English and Literature, University of Liberia, posted 24-6-2003, www.polosbastards.com/liberiabackgrounder240603.htm – Human Rights Watch, *Essential Background – Overview of human rights issues in Liberia* (Human Rights Watch, December 31, 2003) – H.D. Nelson (Global Security), *Liberia – a country study*, March 1985, www.globalsecurity.org.

From 1991 onwards the insurgency fragmented into large-scale gang warfare. The NPFL became predominantly a business venture, selling timber, diamonds and iron ore, while new rebelgroups emerged. The use of child soldiers was widespread and the abuse of narcotics resulted in large-scale atrocities. The Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS) organized an intervention force called ECOMOG, but this force became itself a party in the conflict.

The succession of fighting, killing and looting sprees continued until the fourteenth peace accord was signed in Abuja, Nigeria in August 1996. Elections brought Charles Taylor to power. Tensions between the various former faction leaders remained and in 2000 civil war broke out again when rebels from the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) which was dominated by Mandingo's and later the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), mostly Krahn people, sought to unseat president Taylor. Again the conflict was characterized by widespread violations against civilians, rape, sexual violence and looting. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced by the fighting.

Finally, on 18 August 2003, a peace agreement was signed in Accra, Ghana, between the Liberian government and the two rebel groups, former president Taylor went into exile in Nigeria and a 15.000 strong UN peacekeeping force (UNMIL) brought an uneasy end to the renewed civil war. A transitional government for two years was installed, headed by chairman Bryant, and democratic elections are scheduled for October 2005.

The present situation

The country is presently in the first phase of a two-year plan of post-conflict reconstruction. There are slight improvements in the humanitarian, human rights and political situations. Yet, widespread human rights violations, including abuses against children, continue to be committed with impunity, particularly in areas where peacekeepers have been late to deploy.[2] Amnesty International has produced a report one year after the peace agreement to assess the present situation.[3] In July 2004, 14.000 of the planned 15.000 UN peacekeepers were present in the country and the DDRR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation) process has resumed after the failure in December 2003.[4] By 25 July almost 60.000 combatants had been disarmed and demobilized. Many combatants are tired of war and eager to demobilize, but tensions within the parties continue to pose a threat to the peace process. Rehabilitation and reintegration programmes have been inadequately planned and implemented, largely because of a lack of resources. Especially in remote areas groups of combatants are still active, intimidating civilians and exploiting resources. The conduct of

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[2] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Report: Watchlist on children and armed conflict, *Nothing left to lose – the legacy of armed conflict and Liberia's children*, June 2004, www.womenscommission.org.
[3] Amnesty International, *Liberia one year after Accra – immense human rights challenges remain*, 18 August 2004.
[4] Unmil started to disarm fighters near Monrovia on 7 December 2003, but was forced to abandon the exercise 10 days later after former combatants rioted in the city to demand cash for handing in their guns. At least nine people were killed during three days of disorder and looting. Unmil agreed to pay former fighters a part of their rehabilitation allowance, but then the camp was overwhelmed by people far exceeding the capacity. Critics say Unmil was not ready for the disarmament process and the whole exercise was badly prepared.

the combatants is a result of frustrations with the slowness of the DDRR-programme, unmet promises about allowances, training and jobs and resentment against their former leaders who are now in Monrovia.[5]

From the 60.000 demobilized combatants only 6000 were under the age of 18, far less then expected. Estimations are that between 2000 and 15.000 child soldiers were associated with the armed forces.[6] Amnesty International gives several reasons for the small number of demobilized child combatants: many children have spontaneously returned home, others have not heard about the DDRR-process and some children are believed to fear the potential stigma of association with the fighting forces if they participate in the DDRR-programme. There are also children that are still with their former commanders and are being used as labour forces. Girls also stay with their commanders for economic reasons. If asked what they need at the DDRR they reply mostly with 'school' or 'small business'. The resources required however to provide them with viable alternatives are not yet there. There is also concern about the fact that children associated with fighting forces are given $300 cash at the DDRR, while this is known not to be the best method. There is a serious risk of money being diverted to commanders or used for purposes other than education and training. There are major deficiencies in the rehabilitation and reintegration of children, largely due to a lack of funds. Children are going back to communities but nothing is there; families, communities and schools have no support. The lack of viable alternatives forces children back into prostitution, drug-dealing or re-recruitment for rebelgroups active in Ivory Coast.

UN agencies, USAID and NGO's are working hard on designing and implementing short-term programmes aimed at absorbing demobilized combatants. Civil society is critical on a lack of consultation by Unmil on the DDRR process. They are especially concerned about a preferential treatment for former child soldiers while reintegration programmes should benefit the whole community. Already there is resentment among youth that have not been combatant and for whom there is no access to training or money at all.

The restoration of government authority throughout the country is a long way from being achieved and corruption is still widespread. J. Klein, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative in Liberia, calls the NTGL 'the coalition of the unwilling'.[7] Continuing lack of cohesion within the NTGL and political power struggles are resulting in donor governments withholding much-needed funds for the reconstruction process. At the International Reconstruction conference on Liberia, in February 2004, the international community pledged $520 million to help rebuild Liberia, but less than half that money has been forthcoming.

Despite this people are optimistic, they are convinced that this time peace is going to stay, people are tired of war. More goods are being imported and they believe new investors will come once the disarmament process is finished. But what is going to happen once the donor money runs out? Sierra Leone already finds itself at this critical point, where all the aid organisations have left the country for Liberia and other places.

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[5] Irinnews, *No more guns and nothing to do say disgruntled ex-combatants*, 20 December 2004.
[6] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Report: Watchlist on cildren and armed conflict, *Nothing left to lose – The legacy of armed conflict and Liberia's children*, June 2004, www.womenscommission.org.
[7] Irinnews, *A shattered nation on a long road to recovery*, 17 August 2004.

THE CONFLICT IN SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone saw itself plunged into a similar conflict, although the ethnic aspect was more or less absent. Bad governance and deteriorating economic conditions were key underlying causes of the Sierra Leonean conflict. It were mainly frustrated young men who protested against the bad governance system and the lack of opportunities for them. Sierra Leone gained independence from Britain in 1961. In the 1967-elections the opposition-party All People's Congress (APC) defeated the ruling party, Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The APC instituted from 1967 on a highly centralized, inefficient and corrupt bureaucratic governance system, marginalizing the people and robbing them of their rights and freedoms. Access to resources was almost impossible for non-APC members, local government structures were weakened and provincial/rural communities were neglected. This led to a growing poverty and isolation in the countryside as well as growing bitterness against 'the system'.

The youth were the ones who suffered most from political and economic exclusion. They were increasingly marginalized and lost faith in the system. This led to rebellions and student activism during the 1970s and 1980s, which were strongly influenced by the revolutionary language of Pan-Africanism and Khaddafi's (Libya) 'Green book'.[8] Some authors have argued that the atrocities committed by youth during the Sierra Leonean conflict, including the 'famous' amputations, were a sign of irrational 'New barbarism'.[9] Richards (1996) contradicts this view in his book 'Fighting for the rainforest' in which he argues that the decision to resort to violence was a rational strategy where youth didn't see any other way out and were offered positive incentives like education and material assets by the rebelgroups.[10] He characterizes the rebel leadership as an excluded intellectual elite. Their motives were mainly revenge on the exclusion by the patrimonial state and an attempt to rebuild society from within.

In 1971 Siaka Stevens turned the country into a Republic, with himself as executive president. In the same year the force commander John Bangura and other officers were arrested for a coup plot. Among them was Foday Sankoh, a corporal and photographer in the army. In 1991 it was this same Foday Sankoh who reappeared as the leader of the rebel movement called the Revolutionaly United Front (RUF). In 1991 this rebel movement launched a series of attacks on some border towns in eastern Sierra Leone. They were supported by Charles Taylor in retaliation for the fact that Sierra Leone had participated in the Nigerian-led West African intervention force (ECOMOG) in Liberia against Taylor. So besides the internal ripeness, the brutal civil war going on in neighbouring Liberia played an important role

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[8] Khadaffi wrote his political thoughts in the *Green Book*. The Green Book purports to solve all the major problems of political organization in the modern world and dismisses virtually all prior political ideas. Khadaffi had a vision to create one powerful African nation out of 50 disparate states. Taylor as well as Sankoh were products of Khadaffi's training camps for African 'revolutionaries' and their guerrilla groups, the NPFL and RUF, were armed and supported by the Libyan leader.

[9] The ideas of the 'New barbarism thesis' were brought together by american journalist Robert Kaplan in a book on the Balkan conflict (1993) and later in an influential essay on Africa (1994), quoted by Richards: *Fighting for the rainforest*, 1996.

[10] P. Richards, *Fighting for the rainforest*, 1996.

for the actual outbreak of fighting. Charles Taylor reportedly sponsored the RUF as a means to destabilize Sierra Leone.

The Government did not take the attacks serious. The RUF advanced northwards and westwards and grew quickly till a considerable force. From that time on the country found itself in a dehumanising civil war with unprecedented human rights violations and brutal acts against civilians. Local defence forces, Kamajors, joined the war to protect local communities against the RUF, but they also violated human rights in brutal ways. In 1994 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) extended the mandate of peacekeeping troops in Liberia (ECOMOG) to include Sierra Leone.

After several failed peace-agreements the RUF and the government of Kabbah signed the Abuja cease-fire in November 2000 and the situation improved little by little. Elections were held in May 2002 in which Kabbah was elected president. The war was officially declared over in January 2002.

A confluence of factors helped end the war, including the deployment of the 17,000-member United Nations peacekeeping force UNAMSIL, a U.N. arms embargo against neighbouring Liberia and the commitment of British troops to stop a rebel advance against the capital, Freetown, in 2000. But despite the disarmament of some 47,000 combatants and the successful completion of presidential and parliamentary elections in May 2002, the deep rooted issues that gave rise to the conflict – endemic corruption, weak rule of law, crushing poverty, and the inequitable distribution of the country's vast natural resources – remain largely unaddressed by the government. The draw-down and eventual complete withdrawal of UNAMSIL peacekeepers set for December 2004 has been postponed to June 2005[11] and continuing insecurity in neighbouring Liberia give cause for concern.[12]

The present situation

The overall political and security situation in Sierra Leone has remained stable since the elections in 2002. Despite the stable security environment, the socio-economic situation in the country has continued to be very difficult, including rising youth unemployment and the spiralling prices of basic commodities, causing tensions among the population. The negative impact of the lack of improvement in the living conditions of the majority of the population on the prospects for national recovery remains an issue of serious concern.[13]

The border areas give reason for concern. On the Liberian side they still appear to be very porous and open for arms smuggle. Along the border with Guinea there are also some problems with Guinean armed forces being accused of activities inside the territory of Sierra Leone (especially in border town Yenga). There are still 66.000 Liberian refugees in the country, spread over 8 camps.

[11] United Nations Information Service, *UN security council extends mandate of Sierra Leone mission until 30 June 2005*, 20 September 2004, www.unis.unvienna.org.
[12] Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Overview – Sierra Leone*, january 2004.
[13] UN Security Council, *24th Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone*, 10 December 2004.

The DDR-programme was officially closed on 31 March 2004. Over the past four years a total of 54.000 ex-combatants have received reintegration benefits. The ex-combatants in Sierra Leone have received a 6-week skills training and were given tools and starting money. But as the market was not ready to absorb all these combatants with insufficient skills, many of the ex-combatants have sold their tools and have disappeared; some have gone back to the mines, others are on the streets, or maybe finding their way to Ivory Coast.

On 22 May 2004 local elections were successfully held, which has re-established an important institution of governance whose neglect had been among the major cause of the conflict. Unamsil, the UNDP and other international partners were involved in supporting the activities of the National Election Commission and the electoral campaigning was generally peaceful.

There is progress in the reconstruction of the education and health sectors. Schools have reopened in all parts of the country but classes are overfull. Primary school enrolment has increased by 70% since 2002 and complementary rapid education programmes for young people have been expanded. Problems remain in the educational sector, including shortages of personnel and a lack of equipment.

While the country is recovering and substantive progress has been made, improvement has yet to be felt by the people in many areas. It is high time they see and feel that the situation really improves. Although the economy is recovering with small growth and investments increase, the people still have to coop with rising prices of their daily needs. At this moment Sierra Leone is facing a difficult phase in which the donor support will decline drastically as a result of shift of priorities after 3 years of assistance and reconstruction. Journalists in the country notice a serious threat that especially young people will find themselves in the same situation that gave rise to the conflict: no job opportunities, lack of education and lack of political participation. Most aid organisations prioritise infrastructural projects and projects with quick results. The structural problems in education, political structures, the role of civil society and community committees and employment opportunities have gotten too little attention yet and are a great challenge for the coming time.

THE SUBREGIONAL DIMENSION: THE MANO RIVER UNION

Formally Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea constitute the Mano River Union. The Mano river Union came into being on 3 October 1973 when President Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone and William Tolbert of Liberia signed an economic co-operation pact. The MRU-Declaration made provision for other West African countries to join the Union and Guinea became a member on 25 October 1980.[14] On 20 May 2004, the presidents of Guinea and Sierra Leone and chairman Bryant from Libera, held a one-day summit in Conakry to officially reactivate the Mano River Union. The heads of state expressed their commitment to promoting confidence building measures and security in the subregion and strengthening

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[14] Source: www.manoriver.com.

of cooperation among their countries. This is quite remarkable as the relations between the three countries have not been strengthened by the conflict, rather have created hostility and distrust. They have accused each other of supporting rebelgroups and destabilising their neighbouring countries. But especially the departure of Taylor has given a new impulse to improving the relations between the three countries, which is being coordinated from the secretariat of the Mano River Union which is based in Freetown. In February 2004 the MRU Peace Forum was launched, which is giving an extra impetus to the peacebuilding activities in the region. This forum is constituted by persons selected from civil society organisations and social movements of the three Mano River Union countries in the following sectors: youth, women's issues, democracy, human rights and traditional and religious leaders. The main objective of the Forum is to directly intervene in the Mano River Union conflict by enhancing critical support for and contributing to local and regional processes and capacities for peace through the development of a strong network of NGO's.[15]

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the two civil conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia have devastated both countries. Sierra Leone is still ranked in the Human Development index of the United Nations as least 'livable' country.[16] Both countries find themselves in the crucial first phase of reconstruction and peacebuilding and it is against this background that this thesis will investigate the role of young people in the peacebuilding proces. The following chapter will give a short account of the context in which the African youth are living; it will introduce the concept of youth in Africa and describe the field of peacebuilding, post-war reconstruction and related concepts.

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[15] International Alert, *Report on the Mano River Union peace forum inauguration*, Feb. 7th 2004, www.international-alert.org.
[16] United Nations, *Human Development Report, 2004*, www.hdr.undp.org.

Chapter 3. Context

Global dynamics: between poverty and opportunity

Since the beginning of the 1980s, African countries have witnessed a continued deterioration of their national economies. External debts have risen, prices for raw commodities have gone down, structural adjustment policies have in many cases worsened the situation and civil wars have had disastrous effects on the continent. Young people and other vulnerable social groups have become the first victims of these crises. The services which are most required by young people like education and health services are in general the first to be curtailed, while military expenditures and prestigious development projects stay intact.

At the same time youth have increasingly more access to images of the prosperity in the Western world through globalisation processes like the continuing development of information technologies and transportation possibilities. The influence of Western values and images creates a paradox for young Africans who are exposed to the wealth and growing opportunities in the West, while at the same time being confronted with a reality of economic decline and conflict. This forms an obstacle for their aspirations, as also indicated by Homer-Dixon: 'the combination of wealth-poverty disparities and limits to growth is likely to lead to a crisis of unsatisfied expectations within an increasingly informed global majority of the disempowered'.[1]

This chapter will introduce the concept of youth in Africa and describe the context of the globalising world. It will also give a description of peacebuilding and post-war reconstruction as well as related concepts like civil society, grassroots and empowerment.

YOUTH IN AFRICA IN A GLOBAL ERA

The concept of youth in Africa

The term 'youth' can be used in several ways pointing to different age-groups or developmental states. Sociologically youth denotes an interface between childhood and adulthood. Different cultures have different interpretations of who belongs to the 'youth' and when a

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[1] T. Homer-Dixon in H. Miall, O. Ramsbotham and T. Woodhouse, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 1999, p. 79.

person can be considered to be an 'adult'. In general 'youth' refers to adolescents (defined by UNICEF as people in the second decade of life), and the UN has adopted the age category between 15 and 24 as the definition of youth.

The concept 'youth' is mainly a Western concept, which, as De Waal explains, didn't have meaning in traditional African societies where stages of life followed the pattern of child – single man/warrior – adult and for women of girl – wife – mother.[2] Circumcision or other transitional rituals functioned as a demarcation line between children and adults. With the influence of Western culture and with the increase of formal education, which lengthened the period of childhood, the concept of youth also became meaningful in African societies. But even presently the definition of youth in terms of chronological age is still problematic especially in the African context. What to think about 13 year old girls getting married, a 30 year old man still dependent on his parents for most decisions or child soldiers who know how to use the gun at an early age of 10? The definition of 'youth' in the African contexts can only be considered in relation to other factors and variables.

In this research I will use the term 'youth' to point to students and young adults in the ages ranging from 18–30. I have chosen this group in line with the aims of this research that wants to look at the contributions of 'young Africans' in peacebuilding activities, for which I will focus on 'older' youth so as to include youth that have completed some kind of higher education or training.

The rights framework

The last years have witnessed a growing concern with the rights of children, which has resulted in several useful instruments like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). These conventions emphasize that there is a fundamental obligation, laid down in law, for states to realise the rights of children. The convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted in 1989, has become the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history. It has been ratified by every country in the world except for Somalia and the US. By ratifying this instrument, national governments have committed themselves to protecting and ensuring children's rights and they have agreed to hold themselves accountable for this commitment before the international community. Unfortunately, as McIntryre puts it: 'children's rights are the subject of one of the most comprehensive and *least implemented* bodies of international legislation in existence'.[3] Judging from the poor condition of children in many African countries we can conclude that many African states acceded to the convention without a real intention to live up to the commitments they were making. For 'youth' the situation is even more gloomy, as they find themselves in an unfavourable position between child- and adulthood. Most national and international policymaking for children is concerned with infants

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[2] A. de Waal in A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002, p. 15.
[3] A. McIntyre, *Rights, root causes and recruitment*, 2003, emphasis added.

and primary school children, in any case not exceeding 18 years, while teenagers and youth are given little attention.

The African Charter on the rights and Welfare of the Child was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in July 1990 and came into force in December 2000. It is broadly similar to the CRC, but it took more than ten years for just fifteen African states to accede to the African Charter. De Waal suggests that this might indicate that for African states the signing of international conventions is regarded as 'a largely symbolic act, a means of acquiring status in international fora'.[4] In any case it is clear that child rights are not compatible with war and that in many African countries whole generations have grown up with violence and war. Peace is a prerequisite for realising the rights of children and youth. Both Sierra Leone and Liberia have an immense task to compensate for the ten years of civil war in their countries.

The position of youth in traditional cultures

Argenti explains that the role of young people in African countries has dramatically changed in the past century.[5] Social systems that exist today have been substantially transformed from the local-level kinship-based systems that existed a century ago. This development is an important factor in understanding the current status of youth and the attitudes of African governments towards youth, which is still strongly influenced by the original role young people played in pre-colonial societies and in contemporary rural settings. Naturally there is a huge diversity in Africa's traditional rural societies, but in general youth had a common position in the traditional hierarchies that was subordinated to the power of male elders. All men that had not reached the level of economic importance that would permit them to acquire wives and build their own compounds were still classified as 'children' and had no say in community matters, just like women and small children. Childhood thus refers to a position in a social hierarchy more than it does to biological age.

Colonialism brought profound changes to this structure, primarily through the new opportunities it offered to young men. They were needed in the new bureaucracy as clerks or secretaries and these jobs were seen as a quick means to acquire status and sometimes even power over traditional elders. After independence young men took the jobs of departing colonial administrators and this stimulated the shift of young people from the rural to the urban areas. For many this exodus resulted in a great disappointment, as there were only opportunities for a small group. Most of the young, educated or uneducated that have been drawn to Africa's cities have not succeeded in finding jobs in government employ or opportunities in the formal business sector. Also the hierarchical system is still reflected in the education style in most African countries, where teachers have absolute authority and sheer commemoration of knowledge is more important than creativity. This traditional position of youth in African communities might be one of the reasons for the little status

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[4] A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002.
[5] N. Argenti in A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002, pp. 123–153.

youth groups and youth ministries seem to have in present African societies, as we will see later on in this research.

The state of African youth: transition and paradox

Although it is difficult to generalise about 'African youth', it can be said that African youth find themselves at the crossroads of a transition from traditional to modern society. The traditional institutions of socialization of youth are disappearing under the pressure of urbanisation and socio-economic transformations. In many respects the youth of Africa are living in economies that are not able to fulfil their expectations that are fed by growing contact with the images of the prosperous Western societies.

R. Mkandawire, regional director of the Commonwealth youth programme of the Africa Centre, describes the African youth as being caught up in a double crisis.[6] Firstly the crisis of growing up in a 'detribalized' environment where they less and less subscribe to the values and norms of their parent's ethnic groups. Through the growing influence of the media and the Western images the youth become part of a global culture that is radically different from their parents' culture. The role of the family is changing and becomes less important in the socialisation and individual development of young people. It becomes increasingly difficult for parents to fulfil their role of providing advice and nurturing the young into society. The disintegration of existing normative and ethical value systems caused by globalisation and urbanisation leads to a lack of sufficient legitimate regulatory mechanisms and social controls. The disintegration of African concepts like 'ubuntu'[7] has weakened the transmission of traditional values and has created a gap in socialisation structures. This process is aggravated by protracted conflicts that divide and scatter families for years on end.

Secondly, the youth are caught up in a situation of growing up in economies that are in crisis and not able to fulfil their expectations. While the images of the West are everywhere, they have to cope with a culture of poverty all around them. Global values, which encourage competition and unlimited consumption, are impacting their lives and encourage unrealistic expectations, while the economic and social conditions around them are rapidly deteriorating.[8]

In general African youth find themselves in a paradoxical situation in many ways: on the transition between tradition and modernity, between poverty and contrary global values, tossed back and forth between supervision and subordination on the one hand and autonomy on the other. According to Mkandawire there is an urgent need to rebuild the bridge of communication between the youth and the older generation, based on mutual trust. Moral judgements will not succeed in dealing with problems such as Hiv/aids among young

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[6] R.M. Mkandawire, *Experiences in youth policy and programme development*, 1998.

[7] Ubuntu is an African concept that refers to group solidarity and the idea that human beings are all connected to each other and influenced by the people around them. It recognizes the importance of relationships and of building communities.

[8] Un Habitat, *Strategy paper on youth in Africa*, 2002.

people. Few African countries currently recognise youth as responsible actors and youth are mostly excluded from decision-making processes. I agree with Mkandawire that it is most important that the youth should be seen again as responsible participants who are ready to contribute to the task of development.

Youth: a threat to society or actors of social change?

Mkandawire is not standing alone in his analysis of the changing relationship between youth and society. M. Diouf describes in his article 'Engaging postcolonial cultures: African youth and public space' how the perception of African youth as 'the hope of the world' has been replaced by 'representations of youth as dangerous, criminal, decadent …' and a threat for society.[9] With the achievement of independence the nationalist project sought to put young people at the centre of its plans for economic development and national liberation. Youth represented the promises of restored identity, both national and Pan-African.[10] They were seen as 'the bearers of the twofold project of modernity and the return to the sources of African cultures' and were regarded as the chief agents of the transformation of African societies. Today youth are not conceived of as constructive social actors anymore, but are rather seen as potential sources of political disruption and delinquency. As Adogame explains youth represent various forms of threat to society and its institution: new ideas, new ways of life, and independence of judgement. Youth have become a problem for society and society a problem of youth.[11]

Diouf argues that the decay of the representation of the youth as hope of the world was mainly due to the bankruptcy of the nationalist project and the failures of nationalist economic, cultural and political models. The economic crisis, urbanisation and migration to the West changed relations in such a way that the youth lost their prestigious status. The collapse of institutions of supervision and education and the narrowing economic opportunities brought the youth into a marginalized position. Excluded from the arenas of power, work, education and leisure, they sought for new ways of profiling themselves, often at the margins of society. This 'geography of the street', being the suburbs, the forests, prohibited zones, drugs or mineral riches, is often understood as a geography of delinquency or of resistance. But it is foremost a geography of possible developments outside the conventional images of success, which had become largely inaccessible to them. Youth look for possibilities to enter the global stage and 'make their way into the world market's economy of desires and consumption.' They are looking beyond national borders, appropriate new technologies, but also here we see that the world of opportunity and abundance escapes them and that they are 'perpetually on the margins and the borderlines of the increasingly xenophobic West.'[12]

[9] M. Diouf, *Engaging Postcolonial Cultures*, 2003, pp. 1–12.
[10] For an explanation of Pan-Africanism, see chapter 5, p. 55 on Diaspora youth, under identity.
[11] A. Adogame, *Tomorrow's leaders as leaders for today*, 2002, pp. 211–212.
[12] All quotations: M. Diouf, *Engaging Postcolonial Cultures*, 2003.

Globalisation and African youth

The growing engagement and interdependencies between nations and people across the world don't leave any community unaffected. Globalisation has increased the interconnect-edness of the globe on several levels: material (flows of trade, capital, people), spatio-temporal and cognitive (growing public awareness). The increase of communication technologies exposes people to values of other cultures and identities become less fixed or unified.[13] Relatively cheap ways of transportation enable people to travel and settle all over the world.

Globalisation is considered to be one of the defining characteristics of this time, but despite that it remains a highly contested concept. Broad as it is, it is hard to define what it entails exactly. From an economic perspective the continued interconnectedness of national economies leading to economic growth can be seen as a positive development contributing to higher living standards and to increasing opportunities. But at the same time globalisation also sharpens the division between the people who profit from this process and the people who don't have access to the gains of globalisation. 'Even as it brings the world closer together, globalisation is deepening the global imbalance in the distribution of wealth and power across the spectrum of economic, political and social activities.'[14]

In the many debates about globalisation one of the most highly affected groups of people are rarely considered – young people. As written in a report of the International youth parliament: '… young people are at the sharp end of globalisation. They can be amongst the most affected, but are also potentially the most adaptable to change. Young people are not only vulnerable to the vast changes brought on by the processes of globalisation, but can also be the key change agents.'[15]

Youth in Africa find themselves in an extremely complicated position towards globalisation. They are one of the groups that is most left out in the whirlwind of global developments. Ironically enough the development of media and communication technologies gives them the possibility to know what is happening on the other side of the world, while mostly incapable to take part themselves in those developments. For some of them new opportunities emerge, for others it remains wishful thinking.

Also outside the economic sphere there are undoubtedly positive developments related to globalisation: human rights awareness has grown and international treaties are tools for improving the human rights situation; internet provides access to information and enables communication beyond national borders; international trainings and conferences have become more accessible for African youth and African youth can also increasingly be found in educational institutions in the West. But on the other hand many youth live in a context of limited access to education, technology or employment, protracted civil conflicts, spreading of HIV/aids, poor health provisions, external debts, famine, stagnating economies and a growing digital divide. These poor conditions are more often then not related to global

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[13] D. Held and A. Mc. Grew, *An introduction to the globalisation debate*, 2000.
[14] International Youth Parliament (Oxfam), *The youth guide to globalisation*, 2002.
[15] International Youth Parliament (Oxfam), *Highly affected, rarely considered*, 2003.

developments, starting with colonialism, going through structural adjustment programmes, international loans and a global trading system that is monopolised by the most prosperous nations.

The West: the dualistic attitude

The poor economic conditions in the African countries and the lack of opportunities for youth in almost all spheres of life – education, employment, leisure, politics – have increased the migration towards the Western countries. The lack of knowledge-infrastructure is a reason for highly educated Africans to pursue further studies in the West and there is little for them to return to in their homecountries. But also for less educated people, the West is perceived as a way to improve their living standard and if there is any opportunity they will take their chance to go there. So both push and pull factors stimulate a movement from Africa to the West.

The only resisting factor at this moment seems to lie in idealism and patriotism. For, although the opportunities of the West are tempting and many young Africans are dreaming about a future abroad, I also noticed a different attitude among the present young generation. They feel it his high time to take up their own responsibility to work on the development of their country and continent and for that ideal some make the choice to stay in their country. They feel it is them that have to work on the development of their continent, not the Western aid organisations. There are different opinions on how far that statement should be taken. Some say they need the assistance and the knowledge of the West to empower themselves. The age of globalisation makes it impossible to close the door for Western influence. They are of the opinion that it is good to profit from trainings and education in the West, if they come back and adjust the knowledge to the local context. Another group wants to minimise the Western influence as much as possible and thinks that they have enough potential in their own cultures/traditions to make the African renaissance a reality. They say that if they accept training and education from the West, they will still be taught to work in the Western way.

This is an interesting tension, and the question is how many of them would really decline an offer to study in the West or work for a Western NGO. I noticed some kind of discrepancy between ideals and personal aspirations of the youth that I met at the conference in Freetown. They see themselves as peacebuilders and they want to work for the development of Africa, but if it comes to money or personal opportunities, they can easily put aside those ideals. Most of them expect funding from Western donors and would easily accept paid jobs in international NGO's. Global values that promote consumption and a world in which people are valued on the basis of their assets, are also reflected in the lifestyle of these youth and are competing with idealism.

Youth movements

As a result of the narrowing opportunities in all spheres of life, young people are actively creating new social orders and movements to give meaning to their lives in an environ-

ment 'in which almost all avenues for self-advancement are closed.'[16] These movements are still understudied, but among the ones that have gotten some attention are the Pentecostal churches and the militant Islamic movements. These two social movements are marked by a powerful youth orientation and by the message that personal moral salvation can transform corrupt public moral order. Especially the Pentecostal Christianity has had an immense impact across Africa. The attraction of young people is mainly due to the aims of stimulating young people's participation in these movements. The movement offers their participants a means of participating in civil society that they might otherwise be denied. The young men and women who join the Pentecostal churches also emphasize the 'global' character of their religious practices and reject traditional practices. Involvement in religious movements is one important means by which African young people can 'carve out their own identities and explore alternative visions of the future.'[17]

Student movements have also been one of the main motors for social and political change in Africa and Student unions have been at the forefront of radical political change in a number of African countries. Universities are therefore often perceived as a threat by regimes in power and their control has been a prime objective for governments. Although the actions of student movements have not always been executed in a systematic and peaceful manner, they have an important role to play in analysing and expressing conflict issues and trends.[18]

Alongside these organized religious and student organisations there are a multiplicity of less visible youth organisations and movements under which we will also find the peacebuilding initiatives of young people. Little is known about those organisations and Alex de Waal identifies a 'pressing need to study, understand and engage with these organisations.'[19]

PEACEBUILDING FROM BELOW

Defining peacebuilding and post-war reconstruction

The last decades have witnessed the emergence of more and more non-violent ways of ending conflict or trying to prevent conflicts. These measures range from early warning systems through peacemaking and peacekeeping to peacebuilding. In 1992 Boutros Ghali wrote an *Agenda For Peace*, in which he identified four possible approaches to manage or resolve conflicts: preventive diplomacy (early warning systems, confidence-building measures, mediation and related diplomatic missions); peacemaking (reaching an agreement by peaceful means e.g. negotiations, mediation); peacekeeping (preventing escalation) and peacebuilding (root causes). Peacebuilding is defined by Boutros Ghali as an 'action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict' (Boutrous-Ghali 1995:46).

[16] A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002.
[17] B. Trudell e.a., *Africa's young majority*, 2002, p. 10.
[18] J. Odera, *Civil society and conflict managing in Africa*, 1997, p. 152.
[19] A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002.

Peacebuilding can be seen to be made up of the 'negative' task of preventing a relapse into overt violence and the 'positive' task of addressing the underlying causes of the conflict. These two tasks can be related to the distinction made in conflict-resolution literature between negative and positive peace, where the former is defined as the cessation of 'direct' violence and the latter as the removal of 'structural' and 'cultural violence'.[20] We can find these two 'tasks' of peacebuilding back in the different post-settlement phases. In the first phase emergency assistance and humanitarian aid have priority, if necessary combined with stabilisation or peacekeeping forces. This phase will be followed by the reconstruction of the country, mostly taken on by UN agencies and INGO's. Donor agencies and their project-implementing partners usually focus on disarmament, demobilisation, resettlement, restructuring of the army and the police force, physical reconstruction and strengthening the capacity of the national government and its local administration.

The most difficult step is the transition from reconstruction to long-term development. After initial years of great investments via aid organisations, these organisations shift to other countries in crisis and the country is left with the immense task of recovery and the creation of solid foundations for peace. This means not only reconstructing but also improving and changing societal structures that often were one of the major causes of the conflicts. It is in this transitional phase from emergency crisis to long-term development that post-conflict countries face grave danger to degenerate into conflict.

Of course the real task of building sustainable peace is a very long and challenging process. It requires changes in human interaction and behaviour, the hardest thing to change in this world. Grassroots organisation and communities need to be made aware of the importance of peace as a pre-condition for development and human rights. Starting with justice and reconciliation it has to develop into a broad process of promoting non-violent communication and mutual understanding and respect, which will take decades of good education and commitment from all actors in society. Although the complexity of conflicts always asks for a combination of different measures and different levels of intervention I would like to stress the importance of this individual level. Peacebuilding starts with creating trust and respect between human beings and every person that learns to respect those values is a contribution to the goal of a peaceful world. Initiatives at the grass-roots level are therefore most important in the process of preventing and transforming violent conflict.

Even though this process of creating non-violent interpersonal relations is the real core of peacebuilding, this research will also focus for a great part on the more 'practical' aspects of peacebuilding. Especially in the first years after the conflict the greatest threat to the fragile peace are weak economies, unemployment, lack of education and training possibilities and bad governance characterised by corruption and little influence of civil society. For that reason I consider all these reconstruction tasks part of the peace building process at the same realising that they are necessary though not sufficient conditions for sustainable peace.

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[20] J. Galtung (1990) has made the distinction between direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence, from which the latter includes all the ideas and practices that legitimise the first two.

Grass roots and civil society

Although the term of peacebuilding used by Boutros Ghali was used in the context of the work and mission of the UN, in the 1990's the emphasis has shifted away from the idea of top-down peacebuilding in which 'powerful outsiders act as experts, importing their own conceptions and ignoring local cultures and capacities,' and now focuses on 'a cluster of practices and principles referred to collectively as "peacebuilding from below."'[21] Main exponent of this approach is John Lederach who explains that the principle of indigenous empowerment 'suggests that conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting' (Lederach, 1995). Lederach is advocate of a comprehensive framework, in which the establishment of an *infrastructure for peace* integrates multiple levels of actors in the peacebuilding process.
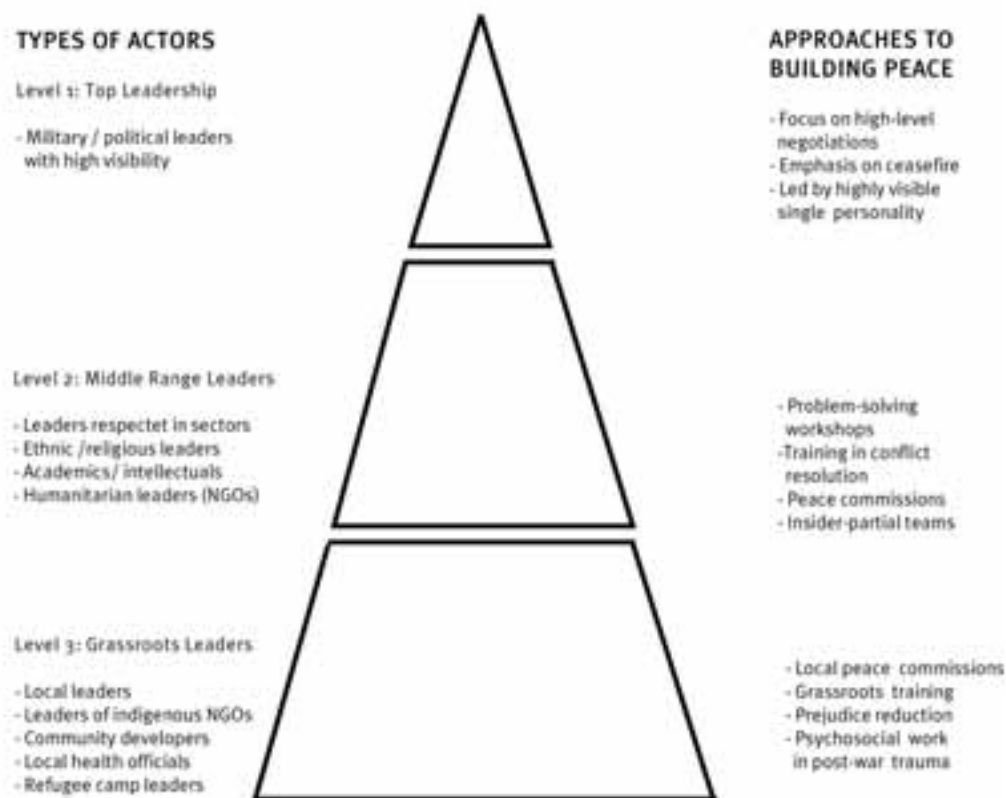
Actors and peacebuilding foci across the affected population.
Source: J.P. Lederach, Building peace. Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies.
Tokyo: UN University 1994, p. 16.

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[21] H. Miall e.a., *Contemporary conflict resolution*, 1999.

He puts special emphasis on bottom-up processes and the integration of indigenous peace-makers. I belief he is very right by emphasising that for the long term sustainability of the peacebuilding process the transformation must be rooted in and built from the context and the people involved.[22]

For promoting peace from 'within', strengthening civil society is one of the primary tasks in a post-settlement society. Successful democratic development and building viable peace in a post-conflict society depends on engaging cross sections of the population in various sectors of social, political and economic life of the society.[23] 'Civil society' is a difficult concept to define and many debates are going on about the exact meaning and function of (African) civil society. Bloomfield defines civil society as 'what occupies the space between governments at the top and the atomised mass of individuals at the bottom.'[24] More practically this includes institutions such as the church, trade unions, cultural institutions, ethnic associations, the media and professional associations. J. Odera brings forward the perception that civil society has a moral as well as political role in the promotion of a just and peaceful society: 'the functioning of the civil society is dependent not just on how it is organised but on the values it pursues.'[25]

Although the struggle for independence and the Pan-African movement are seen as examples of the rise of civil society in Africa, the record of the civil society in Africa has not been very good in the decades after independence, despite the growth of associations and the increased funding by international donors.[26] Babu (African Association of Political Science) observes that 'the institutions of democracy did not have time to ground themselves in society. There was too much faith in the state taking up the mission of democratic social transformation without necessarily being subjected to democratic transformation itself … '[27] Repression by governments has made civil society increasingly passive. This is especially likely to happen during conflicts in which governments, besides restrictive laws, also use less legitimate methods to curtail or prohibit the association, functioning or even existence of civil society organisations.

Currently we are witnessing the second moment of civil society in Africa, which Peter Lewis dates from 1989.[28] Throughout the continent independent political and social forces have emerged pressing for fundamental political change and African Civil society has become more prominent in social economic and political processes. The dwindling economies and the introduction of internationally acknowledged political conditions as accountability, good governance and transparency, provided a strong impetus for civil society to become more vocal. Still though civil society in Africa needs to be strengthened which asks for a 'multifaceted process entailing basic changes in the associational area, the role of an emergent political society and the reconstruction of the state.'[29]

[22] J.P. Lederach, *Conflict transformation in protracted internal conflicts*, 1995.
[23] A. Tola (Afroneth), *Peace building and governance programme*, 2003.
[24] Bloomfield in: *Civil society and conflict management in Africa*, quoted by J. Odera, 1997, p. 148.
[25] J. Odera, *Civil society and conflict managing in Africa*, 1997, p. 148.
[26] F.K. Matanga, *Civil society and the politics of democratisation in Africa*, 2000, p. 56.
[28] P. Lewis, *Political transition and the dilemma of civil society in Africa*, 1998, p. 149.
[29] P. Lewis, *Political transition and the dilemma of civil society in Africa*, 1998, p. 154.

Because of its varied composition and interests civil society does not always act in har-
mony, but its divers composition is an advantage in playing a role in conflict management
as the sources of conflict are also many and divers. One of the greatest challenges of civil
society is to end the cycles of violence in civil conflicts and to participate in reconstruction
processes. Odera points out that it is high time to also consider how the youth can be brought
into this process.

Youth and (educational) empowerment

The grass-roots level is also the level of youth organisations that can play a constructive role
in the peacebuilding process. Youth have a great potential to (re)build trust within commu-
nities and develop relationships between hostile groups. McEvoy stresses the importance of
involving youth in the peaceprocess for the long-term success of the process.[30] A neglect of
the perceptions of youth who are going to be the future leaders is counterproductive to estab-
lishing sustainable peace. McEvoy also points to the fact that the youth perspective — 'how
and what they think about peace processes and the task of reconstructing their societies after
war, remains almost completely unstudied.'[31]

Empowering young people to develop critical judgement and participate confidently in
society, involves teaching personal, social and conflict management skills.[32] Apart from skills
to manage and overcome conflicts, socio-psychological skills as self-awareness, critical
judgement and communication skills are an important basis. Peace education is one way
of creating respect between people and promoting non-violent ways of solving conflicts and
it can play a key role in sustaining peace over the long term.[33] Through the teaching of theo-
retical concepts, practical skills and by working on the critical awareness of people, it seeks
to enhance the agency of individuals to create a culture of peace.[34] Peace education does not
stop at critical understanding but is linked to action towards transformation. This links up
with the common approach of all educational or empowering programs, namely that con-
flicts do not just happen, but that humans are always involved in some way, 'whereby sitting
on the fence and watching what happens or the failure to make a pertinent decision are to
be regarded as relevant influencing factors.'[35] The key problem of educational work is how to
empower individuals to make their own judgements and consciously take on an active role
and position in society.[36]

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[30] S. McEvoy-Levy, *Youth, violence and conflict transformation*, 2001, p. 89.
[31] S. McEvoy-Levy, *Youth as social and political agent*, 2001, p. 32.
[32] S. Schell-Faucon, *Conflict transformation through education and youth programmes*, 2003.
[33] D. Bretherton e.a., *Peace education in a post-conflict environment*, 2003.
[34] The UN has started initiatives that stress the idea of a culture of peace. The idea of a 'culture' introduces the
notion of shared meanings and values, and diversity between different peoples of the world.
[35] S. Schell-Faucon (GTZ), *Developing education and youth-promotion measures*, 2002.
[36] Unfortunately there is minimal financial support for youth and educational work because of a lack of visibility

Diaspora and peacebuilding

In the present era of globalisation 'peacebuilding from below' is not restricted to the indigenous people in a local setting. Local communities have their transnational components all over the globe and these Diaspora communities could have a unique position as intermediates between Western expertise and local capacities. Cohen suggests that Diasporas can function as a bridge between the particular and the universal; they are through their dispersion part of the globalisation of the world, but they also preserve their local cultures as part of their identity.[37] They gain extra awareness and knowledge from their lives in two worlds. This could make them potential bridgebuilders. Question is whether they see themselves as such and whether they are accepted in that role by the home country. Very little is known about how these Diasporas influence the peace-process back home. The role of youth in peacebuilding, both Diaspora and home country, will be discussed in depth in chapters 4 and 5.

CONCLUSION

African youth find themselves in a situation characterised by paradoxes: on the transition between tradition and modernity, between poverty and contrary global values, between supervision and subordination on the one hand and autonomy on the other. Globalisation creates this situation in which African youth are exposed to and influenced by the prosperity and opportunities in the West, while at the same time not being able to participate in those processes because of economic decline and conflicts in their own country. The West is by many seen as a stage to improve their living standards and to increase their opportunities; but at the same time the influence the West still has over the African continent is increasingly rejected by African youth.

   Another paradox is the one between the vision of youth as 'the hope of the world' and the future leaders which has increasingly been replaced by an image of youth as deviant and threatening. African youth are hardly perceived as being potential actors of social change; not by governments who exclude them from decisionmaking processes nor by international conventions who either focus on children or on adults. Youth movements are a means for youth to give meaning to their lives in a context where they lack access to almost all spheres of life.

   Youth movements could play an important role in peacebuilding processes, as the sustainability of peace depends for a large part on the inclusion of youth, the future leaders. Peacebuilding processes have to work simultaneously at different levels in society, but the inclusion of civil society and bottom up processes deserve special attention. Youth can play

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of success. Peace education has a long-term focus and is undermined by the need to achieve rapid successes and to focus only on visible and viable aspects.

[37] R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 1997.

in important role in this, but how to empower youth to become critical and responsible citizens and really take action is a major educational challenge. Essential is that the youth must be seen again as responsible participants who are ready to contribute to the task of development.

Chapter 4. Home country youth

The unrecognised resource

This chapter will explore the peacebuilding-activities of youth organisations in Liberia and Sierra Leone and the two sides of youthfull energy, drawing from the scarce literature written on this subject and from my own data. I have collected my own data through interviews with youth from Sierra Leone and Liberia at the training conference 'Youth transforming conflict' in Freetown (April 2004) and from the experiences gained through working with the Mano River Union youth parliament in Guinea and Sierra Leone in October 2004 (see the following pages for more inforamtion on these events).

LITERATURE

Instrumentalisation of youth

Young people are generally not seen as peacebuilders in society, but rather as a catalyst for conflict. Evidence from an influental essay written by Collier (1999) suggests that the proportion of young men in a society indeed enhances the feasibility of rebellion. The greater the proportion of young men, the easier it is to recruit rebels. But a large proportion of young men is not a sufficient condition for conflict. As Paul Collier explains, the most important factor in explaining civil wars are economic agendas. The presence of lootable resources, little education, poverty and unemployment make a society most prone for conflict.[1] Keeping these conditions in mind, we can see the importance of what Alex de Waal (2002) explains: young people do not turn to crime or violence 'ex nihilo by some obscure magnetism, but in response to the particular historical, economic and political conditions' surrounding them.[2] So, if these accompanying factors are eliminated or reduced, a large proportion of young men does not necessarily lead to conflict. Rather, they can also form a potential for a positive development of society. To harness this potential though, there needs to be an opportunity structure that allows and guides them in their political and societal participation.

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[1] P. Collier, *Doing well out of war: an economic perspective*, 1999.
[2] A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002.

Training-conference Youth transforming conflict, Freetown, April 2004

The training-conference Youth transforming conflict was organised by Unoy Peacebuilders and the Network University Amsterdam. Unoy Peacebuilders is an international youth NGO established in 1989. It organises global, regional and local training seminars to enhance the knowledge and skills of youth working for peace, particularly focusing on (post-)conflict regions. The Network University (TNU) is a foundation established in 1998 that believes in innovative approaches to education and communication in order to integrate research and practice. Since 1999, TNU has been successfully developing online educational activities in the field of conflict transformation and earned recognition and awards.

The aim of the trainingconference was to strengthen the local capacities of young people in peacebuilding and conflict transformation. By increasing access to training through face-to-face and online activities, young people were encouraged to further develop their skills to competently deal with conflicts and learn how to make an active difference in their conflict torn societies.

The program consisted of a 2-week online course developed by the Network university in which the participants were introduced to the conflict terminology and learned how to work in an on-line environment followed by a 10-day Face-to-Face Training and Networking Conference in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The main focus of the conference was on developing and practicing skills on how to deal responsibly with conflicts and how to multiply what has been learnt.

The conference was attended by 40 youth-leaders from all over Africa, with an emphasis on West-Africa. I attended the face-to-face conference which gave me the opportunity to observe and talk to African youth leaders and to interview young leaders from Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Young people are easy to influence and their views can easily be shaped, which makes them subject to instrumentalisation for political and economic agendas, for better or worse. Unfortunately it seems as if only rebel leaders and military people have recognized and utilized the capabilities of youth: 'Adolescents strengths and potential as constructive contributors to their societies go largely unrecognised and unsupported by the international community.'[3] McIntyre warns in her article 'Reinventing peace, challenges for a young continent' that, even though children and youth constitute the majority in most African states, they remain marginalized from the security debate and are treated as a non-political, non-military, 'soft' issue: 'Youthful energy constitutes nearly the whole of the human potential of Africa. Unfortunately, there are few protected political spaces in which this can be engaged constructively, and the potential of the majority has in many instances been harnessed for destructive ends.'[4] McIntyre argues that their numbers make them a politically significant element of the population and that instead of seeing them just as a marginal element of the population in need of protection, they should be made stakeholders in conflict resolution.

[3] Womens Commission for Refugee Women & Children, *Untapped potential – adolescents affected by armed conflict*, New York, 2000.
[4] A. McIntyre, *Reinventing peace*, 2002, p. 94.

Participants of the training conference doing groupwork

Participants enjoy going out!

Mano River Union Youth Parliament and Peace Caravan, November 2004

The MRU peace caravan was an initiative of the Mano River Union Youth Parliament, supported by the West African Youth Network (WAYN), two organisations that were also present at the trainingconference in Freetown. I was asked to help with the organisation of the peace caravan and worked 3 weeks with the youth parliament in Conakry, Guinea, and participated in the peace caravan (10–17 November 2004).

The Mano River Union Youth Parliament (MRUYP) is a sub-regional network of young peace builders, students, journalists and human rights activists within the Mano River Union Basin, that advocates for peace, human rights and the development of young men, women and their communities. The MRUYP is an initiative of the West African Youth Network (WAYN) in collaboration with the Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA) and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders Sierra Leone (UNOY Sierra Leone). The parliament was launched in August 2003 during a training seminar on Peace building and Conflict Resolution which was held in Freetown. The members of the parliament will meet yearly in the country of the president of the parliament, which is presently Guinea, to discuss their actionplan. This year the session was held in Conakry from the 21–25th November 2004.

The peace caravan preceded this session as one of the first joint projects of the members of the youth parliament. The aim of the peace caravan was to promote peace, unity and reconciliation in the Mano River Union and to contribute to the United Nations Decade for a Culture of Peace. The peace caravan intended to increase the involvement of youth and local people in peace building in the region and to put pressure on the governments to work on sustainable peace. During the caravan the participants spread the message of peace through flyers, organised workshops with local youth and visited authorities in the capitals. Additionally the peace caravan will be used to make a connection between Westafrican youth in the Netherlands and the youth in their home countries. Through a booklet about the peace caravan and the members of the parliament and video-images of the peace-caravan the Diaspora youth will be informed about the peace caravan and stimulated to make contact with youth in their home country (this will be worked on with Afroneth, in the first half of 2005).

Neglect of Youth

As I have mentioned before, youth find themselves in a grey area between childhood and adulthood, mostly missed out in international conventions and often not recognised as actors. Ironically, during conflicts the potentials of youth *are* recognised and they are used to support political and military agendas. However, as soon as the post-war phase begins, they are marginalized again, without any opportunities for meaningful activities on socio-economic and political level, which was in the case of Sierra Leone the very reason for the conflict to start. Especially after the decisive role they played during the conflict, most youth feel entitled to some influence in political and security matters. If this is cut off during the post-war phase, they are provoked again to resort to violence. Stigmatisation and social and economic marginalisation increase their resentment of society.

The yellow bus of the peace caravan attracted a lot of attention in the villages

Talking to pupils at a school in Coyah, Guinea

Youth Peace Caravan Heads for 3 West African Countries

by Rozemarijn van West

Youths of three West African countries have been exerting efforts to augment and boost regional peace and security initiatives with peace caravan crossing international boarders.

A 7-day peace caravan which brought together 40 youths from the Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, travelled to the boarder towns of the 3 West African countries spreading peace messages.

The Peace Caravan, which took off from Conakry, the Guinean Capital was organised by the Mano River Union Youth Parliament and supported by the West African Youth Network (WAYN).

The youth peace team organised workshops, distributed flyers and sang peace songs stimulating the conscience of the youths towards recognising the importance of their contribution to peace building and conflict resolution in the Mano River Union region, which is comprised of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia.

Young parliamentarians held open discussion with youths about the importance of youth participation in peace initiatives. They also paid visits to the Mano River Union (MRU) Secretariat in Freetown and the MRU peace forum.

The youth's peace initiative was a taste of challenge facing the Mano River Union leaderships. Over the years, the 3 West African countries have experienced simmering cross boarders incursions killing and displacing several thousands of people. These incursions have heightened tension among regional governments.

The young peacemakers Caravan, supported by local artists, went through Pamlap village to Freetown the Sierra Leonean capital. The Caravan succeeded reaching the boarder town of Bo-Waterside bounding Sierra Leone and Liberia. The Peace Caravan journey through Liberia was cancelled for security reason. But the young peace makers crossed into Liberian singing in unison the 3 countries national anthems. Among some Guineans cities and towns visited during the peace journey were; Coyah, Kindia and Madina-Oula. The Peace Caravan returned to Conakry at the end of a 7 day regional peace trip.

The Peace Caravan's three-nation tour was followed by a 5 day session of the Youth Parliament in the Guinean Capital Conakry.

The Guinean youth and Sports Minister, Elhadj Fode Soumah, was instrumental in providing accommodation and food for the youth parliament.

• Members of the Peace Caravan

Article about the peace caravan in the African Bulletin (Media Blackberry)
in the Netherlands, January 2005

The DDR-programme (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) in Sierra Leone has failed to recognise the special needs of youth. Children are protected by international law, but youth who are being demobilised as adults, even though many of them joined the rebelgroups while still being a child, also occupy this 'legal grey area'. Their needs, including trauma-therapy, life-skills and livelihood skills, are not recognised. Eleven years of their lives they have been living in extreme circumstances without education and socialisation of positive values. They need guidance to become complete citizens with psychological, intellectual and social skills that will allow them to survive in society. However, donor-assistance generally focuses on the restoration of infrastructure.[5] Humanitarian organisations that were concerned with the rehabilitation of ex-childsoldiers were primarily targetting children, instead of focusing on broader categories of youth. Youth were only given material support and were provided with vocational training without any direct form of further support, like psychological consultation or job-opportunities, which createes feelings of disappointment: 'Depres-

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[5] A. McIntyre, *Children and youth in Sierra Leone's peace-building process*, 2003.

sion and feelings of neglect by society are increasing amongst the youth in Sierra Leone as they find themselves shunned by society and not provided with opportunities to earn a living by the government.'[6]

The fact that feelings of neglect among the ex-combatants in Sierra Leone are a serious threat for the pace-process is also recognised by a report of P. Richards about the rehabilitation of ex-combatants.[7] The report concludes that the reintegration of ex-combatants is hindered by a 'strong sense of grievance among young people who believe that they have not been fairly treated in the Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process (DDRP).' The report points to the special vulnerability of groups excluded from demobilization, like 'bush-wives' and combatants without a fire-weapon. Although a Unamsil child protection officer has said to have implemented special programs for girls associated with the fighting forces, problems with the reintegration remain.[8] Especially rural youth have very limited opportunities for employment or self-employment, but in fact the lack of job-opportunities is the major problem for everybody. The DDR-programme provided allowances, a vocational training and tools for ex-combatants, but there is no market to absorb all of them. Besides, six weeks training is not enough to compete with the older, experienced skills men and most youth have sold their tools and returned to the diamond fields or else where (Richards, 2004). To really make such training effective they need guidance in how to utilise their skills and how to organise themselves in small business associations. Some NGO's like GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit) are trying to fill this gap by setting up skills training centres in which the pupils get a one-year training that includes life-training. Musa Sam, one of GTZ's technical advisors for community services and facilitator at the Face-to-face conference in Freetown, explains that they purposely put ex-combatants together with victims to stimulate a natural reconciliation process while working together.

ENGAGING YOUTH POSITIVELY

Youth are looking for an identity and a place in the society. According to McIntyre it is the task of families, communities and states to provide them with protected 'social spaces' and 'constructive social incentives' that can facilitate non-violent social change. The productive participation of youth requires cohesive communities, accessible education and recognition of the rights of youth to participate in the peace process.[9] This is a great challenge for a society just coming out of conflict, but it is essential and if this is not being worked on, the relapse into anti-social activities is very present. The fact that rebelgroups have been able to mobilise so many youths, was mainly the result of wide-spread structural problems like a lack of education, livelihood options and opportunities for peaceful participation in decision- and policy making. Rebelgroups like RUF capitalized their recruitment methods on this,

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[6] A. McIntyre, *Children and youth in Sierra Leone's peace-building process*, 2003.
[7] P. Richards e.a., *Where have all the young people gone?*, 2003.
[8] From a speech held by a Unamsil child officer at the training conference in Freetown, April 2004
[9] A. McIntyre e.a., *Politics, war and youth culture in Sierra Leone*, 2002, p. 14.

offering positive incentives like material assets and education that society failed to offer them. Again failing to guarantee the rights of young people and improve their social, economic and political lives will be a serious threat to the sustainability of the security situation in the country.

However, ex-combatants are not the only youth in society. There is a big group that has not been actively involved in the fighting, but who are also not just helpless victims of the war. As Argenti states: 'The remarkable thing to consider is not why some of Africa's youth have embraced violence, but why so few of them have.'[10] Among this group there is a lot of potential for rebuilding society, which is not sufficiently recognised and supported, although the United Nations and several other children's rights advocating agencies are working on the involvement of war-affected children, particularly adolescents, 'in peace processes and in developing policy and programming for their own rehabilitation, reintegration and education, as well as in the development of their communities' (International Tribunal 2000).

The only literature found on the importance of the engaging the youth in peacebuilding are the earlier mentioned articles from Angela McIntyre and an article of McEvoy-Levy, 'Youth as social and political agents: issues in post-settlement peace building.'[11] From these articles we can distillate a few arguments for the importance of youth involvement in (post-conflict) peacebuilding. First of all the ever important cliché that they are tomorrow's society and the future leaders. Their involvement in the peace-process and in the reconstruction of society is essential for the long-term success and sustainability of peace 'as they inherit the political and institutional reigns.'[12] A neglect of the perceptions of youth who are going to be the future leaders is counterproductive to establishing sustainable peace, as we have seen in the articles of McIntyre. According to McEvoy(2001–2) youth have important transformative powers in the post-agreement peace-building phase, both materially and symbolically. From the interviews conducted at the conference in Freetown, it was clear that African youth are very aware of their responsibilities for the future of their societies. They are all very conscious about the need to work together and to be a motor of change; starting with and by themselves:

> *And the only way we can forge ahead is by working together, live in harmony, encourage one another. Those that are weak, try to build them up, those that are down, mend their hearts to make them feel they can contribute.*   (Andrew Lendor, Liberia)

In fact they stressed that they are not only ready to accept their responsibilities as future leaders, but that they also want to play their part now, at this very moment. Of course these two tasks are closely interlinked: being active now in youth-groups will shape their skills and capacities to be good leaders in the future. Their engagement in peace building and the shaping of their political attitudes and skills will have important long-term implications.

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[10] N. Argenti in A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002, p. 151.
[11] S. McEvoy-Levy, *Youth as social and political agents*, 2001.
[12] S. McEvoy-Levy, *Youth, Violence and Conflict Transformation*, 2001, p. 89.

Secondly youth constitute the majority of the population in most African societies. Africa is an extremely 'young' continent. In Sub-Saharan Africa today about 80 % of the population is under 30 years old;[13] in Sierra Leone 44 % of the population is under the age of 14 and youths are comprising more than 50 % of the country's population.[14] This makes the youth a very significant political element of the population and points to the importance of recognising the role youth can play in the (re)construction of their country. McIntyre asks the rhetorical question: 'Do post-war reconstruction programmes that do not prioritise the youthful majority in reconstruction and development lead to long-term stability?'[15] Subsequently she argues that we should realize that young people, 'children and youth included, are not a special interest group but the majority of the African people.'

The dynamism of young people is also stated as an advantage for youth. The power of youthful energy has great transformational potential. Although it can also be used for destructive ends, it can lead to innovative and creative ideas and solutions if rightly guided. As stated by Toh youth-movements can counterbalance processes like globalisation from above through their 'energy, commitment, courage and inspiration to build the new and better world that they will inherit.'[16] Youth can easily adapt to new situations; they can adapt to conflict situations but also to situations out of conflict. Their adaptability to different cultures and new (technological) developments strengthens their capacity to be actors of change and to learn new things, which can foster development in their own region.

THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND

After this short review of existing literature, let us now take a look at what is actually happening on the ground. As earlier explained I have not been able to do extensive fieldwork to see what kind of youth organisations exist and how they work, but the data I have obtained through interviews at the training-conference and by working with the MRU youth parliament can give us some indications of the actual reality. I have focused on youth organisations that work in the domain of peacebuilding. I will start with a short introduction of the context the youthgroups are working in.

Youth policy

During a meeting of the Commonwealth youth ministries in 1995 ministers expressed concern that out of the 51 commonwealth countries, only a limited number had a national youth policy.[17] By now most African commonwealth countries have in place various programmes

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[13] O. Ogbu and P. Mihyo (eds), International Development Research Centre, *African youth on the information highway*, 2000.

[14] A. McIntyre, *Children and youth in Sierra Leone's peace-building process*, 2003, p. 8.

[15] A. McIntyre, *Rights, root causes and recruitment* 2003, p. 96.

[16] S. Toh, *Peacebuilding and peace education*, 2002, p. 91.

[17] R.M. Mkandawire, (1998), *Experiences in youth policy and programme development in commonwealth Africa*, in: Lesotho social science review, vol 4, no 1, 1998, p. 77.

and measures which are maybe not explicitly part of a youth policy but deal directly or indirectly with youth related programmes. However, as these programmes are often not part of a coordinated youth policy, conflicts of interests and duplication of efforts between ministries and departments dealing with youth affairs are common. The limited resources of youth ministries are also related to the little status youth ministries have in African countries. Often the ministries are under-staffed and the majority of the staff is more often than not inadequately trained (Mkandawire, 1998).

One of the most critical steps in the formulation of a national youth policy is to understand the needs and problems of the youth in the socio-economic and political context of a given country. This entails the gathering of data and information on key issues and concerns affecting the lives of the youth. Unfortunately, in many African countries, there is little data and information to be found on youth needs and problems. Not surprisingly therefore in many cases existing programmes for youth do not reflect the real problems of young people as they are not based on any scientific analysis of the prevailing local situation.

Sierra Leone

Although Sierra Leone has a ministry of youth and sports (established after the 2002 elections and headed by Dr. Dennis Bright) and a national youth policy, we see a lot of the abovementioned problems reflected in the Sierra Leone situation. The ministry lacks financial basis to really establish sustainable structures and programmes and the level of consultation of youth groups is still minimal. There are plans to set up a national youth council, but for now that is still in the pipeline. The ministry does not have enough funds to financially support youth groups or even set up its own website. In fact the ministry has to compete for finance with other ministries like education and agriculture who also deal with youth issues. The official youth policy was originated by the ministry of education and launched on 30 July 2003. The youth policy has come under criticism as being 'bogus' and not reflective of the wishes and aspirations of the majority of the youths in the country. Youths were neither consulted nor were they in any way sensitised on the content of the policy.[18] This is mirrored by one of my key informants and a member of the civil society movement who complained about the fact that the youth have not been consulted on the youth policy. He doubts whether a lot of youth know about its existence:

> *Most of the young people in this country have not seen the national youth policy with their eyes. Let alone they understand it. […] Because we are not involved the result is very little. Because we work with young people, we know how to engage them well. So now they are fighting, how they can put the proper structures in place to engage young people in different parts of the country.*
> (Bockarie Enssah, Sierra Leone)

In fact there is still a lot of suspicion among youth towards the government. The idea that the politicians use the youth as tools is widespread and there is fear to be seen as booth-licking when engaging yourself with government officials. In fact this distrust in governmental

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[18] Standard times (Freetown), *National youth policy commemorated*, 3 August 2004.

interventions is a result of many years of bad governance in which lack of consultation and insensitivity to local realities have undermined trust in public policy in general.[19]

Still, the minister of youth and sports, Dr. Dennis Bright, is respected by the youth and he is believed to be motivated to really change things. His special attention is on reaching the rural youth. The youth are very aware of the exclusion of the 'rural youth' and try to urge the minister of youth to include them in the policy. The youth try to get a dialogue started between the minister of youth and other concerned ministries like education and agriculture. The same respondent mentioned before plans to start an interactive forum between politicians and the youth in which especially the youth of the rural areas will be involved:

> *I want to take the minister of mines, mineral resources to the diamond region so that the young people in these regions know, these are the plans the ministry has for us. Then they can tell the minister, this is not in our interest, this one is in our interest, this is what we want to implement. This dialogue forum is very important. Dialogue is the way out. We have demonstrated, we have shouted on the radio, but that has not produced the necessary result.* (Bockarie Enssah, Sierra Leone)

In August 2004 the first anniversary of the youth policy was commemorated through a meeting in Freetown. Plans were made to organise a nationwide youth consultative conference, wherein the policy could be critically reviewed and possible inputs made. Also the importance of a national youth council, which has still not been established, was stressed again by the youth.

Liberia

After the August 2003 peace agreement a ministry of youth and sports was included in the transitional government of Liberia (TGL). Liberia doesn't have an official youth policy yet. They have a youth representative in the parliament though, which was initiated during the rule of Charles Taylor:

> *Taylor did do one good thing getting an 18 year old to sit on his cabinet as a youth advisor.* (Richelieu Allison, Liberia)

Youth leaders say the youth representative is very articulate and he has some influence on decisions. They also say youth are consulted by the government, mostly through the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), but there have not been democratic elections for this unit in the past ten years. There were also youth representatives present in the reconciliation meeting in Abuja in 2000 and in Accra in 2003, which is a sign that the importance of involving youth is at least being recognised.

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[19] N. Argenti in A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002, p. 131.

Activities of youth organisations

The field of youth organisations in Freetown seemed to be very dynamic and growing when I was there in April 2004. Unoy Sierra Leone, which is functioning as an umbrella organisation, has more then 100 affiliated groups only in Freetown.[20] Most of the groups emerged during and after the war, as they saw 'the need to come together' and to 'speak in one voice'. Many had to lay down their activities during the conflict, although some continued and tried to do something against the war in their countries. The West African youth Network (WAYN) for example organised a 3-day hungerstrike in 2001 in front of the Guinean embassy in Monrovia to emphasize the need for dialogue between the Guinean president Conteh and Charles Taylor.
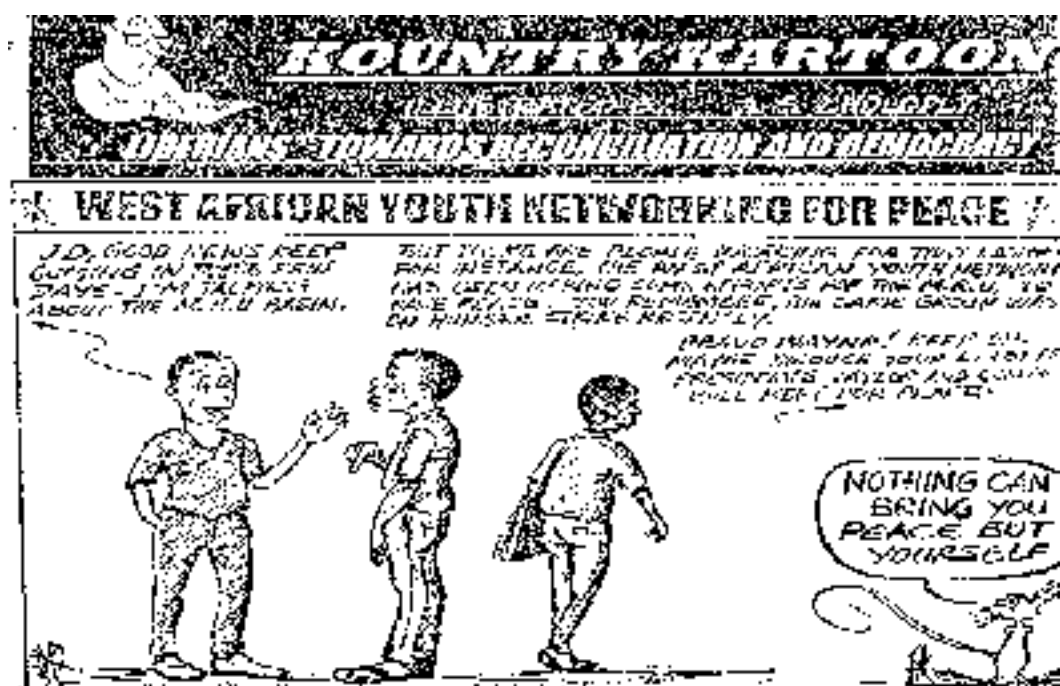
Cartoon about the West African Youth Network in the Liberian newspaper Inquirer, June 27 2001.

Now, in the vacuum of the post-conflict phase, many organisations have taken up their tasks again and new ones are emerging. The youth are seeing a growing need for support in almost all fields of life, but most of the youth groups that focus on peacebuilding organise activities in the domains of human rights, HIV/aids, sensitisation and peace-education, participation of youth in decisionmaking processes, conflict resolution and reconciliation. They promote peace education, organise peace jamborees or peace vigils and are active in advocacy, skills training and pressure on governments through press releases and hunger strikes. Some also try to develop plans for employment opportunities for youth. Radio discussions and programs are a favourite way of spreading their views and projects.

[20] Unoy Sierra Leone was founded in 1989 as the African counterpart of Unoy Peacebuilders, an international NGO based in the Netherlands.

Example youth organisation: Children and youth for peace network

The Children and youth for Peace Network has been initiated by Mohammed Sesay and is striving towards 'promoting peace and unity among fellow compatriots in post war Sierra Leone and also to serve as advocacy on Human Right issues and the prevention of child abuse'. The organisation has established peace clubs in 100 secondary schools across the country. Mohammed explains his motivation: 'In completion to my Senior Secondary School Education I thought it necessary to unite all school goers because the scale of violence among school going pupils is on the increase as a result of the influences of the decade year old rebel war. I want to try to change the negative perspective that the society holds against school going pupils in Sierra Leone; that any time two school meet together there will be violence among each other.' One of their last activities was the Inter School Peace Drama Competition in which 20 schools participated.

The Children and youth for peace network (Sierra Leone), initiated by Mohammed Sillah Sesay, for example established peace clubs in secondary schools. They have representatives in those schools who function as a counsellors for other youth who can come for advise if they have problems or conflicts and they organise activities like peace-workshops or sporting events (see box). Peace Links, a well-known youth organisation in Freetown, organises music and arts-lessons for children and youth after school time and produced two cd's with peace-songs. Peace links was established in 1990 and has become known especially after one of the founders, Vandy Kanyako, received the Hague Appeal for Peace Award. The Liberian National student union is promoting 'palaver' (conflict) management in the curriculum of secondary schools and the universities, which is now almost everywhere included. Youth organisations that are based in refugee camps focus mostly on reconciliation activities through workshops or drama, like the Population Catering Organisation, that is based in Buduburam, a Liberian refugeecamp in Ghana. They organise community meetings in various zones of the camp like peace education workshops with the young people and they prepare street culture- and drama-performances depicting reconciliation eg.

There are also quite a few regional youth initiatives, like the Mano River Union Students Union, the Mano River Union youth parliament and the West African Youth Network. Their focus is more on organising conferences for young people to train them in peacebuilding and management skills, like the Mano River Union Youth training seminar on peace building, conflict resolution and children rights, organised by the wayn and Unoy Sierra Leone in August 2003. They also try to open up opportunities for youth participation in political bodies and institutions like their national governments, the Mano River Union Secretariat and the Ecowas secretariat through youth parliaments and lobbying for participation in decision processes.

In general the youth organisations have to struggle to implement their activities. The lack of funding that will be discussed in detail later, makes that many organisations have no office space or just a small room without any material input like computers, printers, archives etc. All the secretarial costs for transport, paper etc. have to be paid by the members themselves. In Guinea the postal services were so unreliable that all the post of the mru youth parliament

was delivered personally, on foot, by the members. Some older organisations have also been affected by the conflicts in their countries. The secretariat of the West African Youth Network (wayn) for example, which was based in Monrovia, was seriously crippled as a result of the Liberian conflict:

> *Initially we had the program coordinator who was a Nigerian, the regional director and two project assistants who were running a busy secretariat in the Liberian capital. However, all of our equipments, computers and documents were destroyed. We lost one of our project assistants.*
>
> (Richelieu Allison, Liberia, wayn)

Economic empowerment

All young people in these countries are confronted with the problems of economic emancipation. It is very hard to find a paid job and all the work in the youth groups is voluntary. In many cases it even involves extra costs for the members which they have to find through other channels. A few are lucky to have a job with an ngo or international organisation. The rest probably lives from small businesses and informal channels. There is a lot of concurrence though in the informal field and prices of daily commodities rise every day.

Besides the fact that they themselves are confronted with the problem of unemployment, the youthgroups also realise that creating jobs for all the 'idle' youth is a major challenge at this moment. They say it is most important that the youth feel they can do something useful and that they get the opportunity to engage themselves in some kind of training or other meaningful activities. Idle youth are easily manipulated and drawn back into violence. I have asked some key informants how the economic empowerment of youth can be improved and they came up with engaging rural youth in agricultural production and developing the human resource base among youth as most urgent measures to be taken. The emphasis in educational empowerment should lay more on science and technology.

The motivation of the youth themselves is another important factor. Youth groups have to develop the pride and honesty within young people to work (honestly) for their bread. Youth themselves could get involved in door-to-door garbage collection, transportation companies (this already happens, for example ex-combatants who have set up a motorbike company or youth that have opened a carwash for the cars of international aid organisations) and young people in business should organize themselves into business zones. However, it remains a big challenge for both countries to reintegrate all ex-combatants and drop-outs into the schooling-system or to find job-opportunities for them.

Peacebuilder as a new identity

It is always difficult to indicate what motivates these particular young people to join peacebuilding organisations but when listening to these youth active in peacebuilding organisations they al speak proudly of themselves as being a 'peacebuilder' and the moment that they realised the importance of uniting the youth in their country. Being a peacebuilder gives them a new identity in an environment where they have very few opportunities; defining their identity through work is almost impossible due to unemployment, while employment

is 'the most central transition enabling young people to achieve the other transitions to adulthood and become independent adults,' as explained by Wyn and White (2000).[21] One of the respondents explains:

> *Actually I am a business studies student. But I have become more interested … I know about preaching peace I know about coordinating peace activities by taking people, sensitising them first before going to the particular conflict, how to cool down the situation, everything, it's just a experience I gained from various workshops and other things.* (Mohammed Sillah Sesay, Sierra Leone)

In fact new social movement theorists like Habermas and Touraine also argue that actors in new social movements like peace or ecological movements 'are not identifiable in socio-economic terms, but on the basis of "identity". Participants act together since they identify with a common social concern.'[22]

Except for a new identity the role of peacebuilder also opens up new opportunities for these youth. Many (international) NGO's organise conferences, trainings and workshops on several subjects like human rights, peace building, community development or leadership training to involve youth in conflict transformation and community work. These conferences are almost becoming a hype, organised all over the continent and offering youth active in peacebuilding organisations several opportunities per year to attend these conferences, travel to other countries and meet other youth. While being in Freetown for 10 days I heard at least about three different seminars going on, ranging from 'The empowerment of youths for sustainable development' to a 'National interactive forum on nightlife policy for Sierra Leone'. This 'conference hopping' is becoming such a dominant pattern among youth leaders that the effectiveness of all these discussions is being questioned by now. Some youth say it is too much talking while it is time for action.

Indeed the effect of such meetings can be questioned. The exchange of views, discussions between youth and networking are positive aspect of the conferences, but it strongly depends on the organisers and facilitators of the conference whether the training will be effective. Often key speakers pour out loads of information over the youth without space for much dialogue. This might still be a reflection of the style of education in Africa that according to Argenti has long been based on traditional age hierarchy wherein students just had to memorise, repeat and recite[23]. It is difficult to draw any conclusions about the effect of such seminars and conferences, but it would be useful if more research would be done to evaluate their impact.

Another problem is that it is mostly the same people, the leaders of organisations, who attend these conferences and that it is not known how well they multiply what has been learnt. In fact the same group of active people can be found in many of the conferences. Also new initiatives for youth organisations try to get active people with experience for their new organisations, which means that the same people are often active in several organisations at the same time. This does generally not enhance the quality of their work, but having various functions in different organisations is by many youths seen as a status symbol. Indeed it

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[21] J. Wyn and R. White, *Negotiating social change*, 2000, p. 169.
[22] T. Marks, *Young warriors*, 2001, p. 146.
[23] Argenti in A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002, p. 128

seems that for some youth the status and opportunities are equally important motives as their desire to build peace. Money, status and power are competing with their intentions of being a peacebuilder. A lack of reflection on their own actions can add to a discrepancy between their ideals and their attitudes.

The temporality of youth

Status and personal careers are important themes for most young people, but in the case of youth movements this characteristic is especially significant. The fact that youth are 'moving', becoming adults and in the process of building their careers implies that their contribution to a youth organisation is always limited in time; especially when they are offered paid jobs elsewhere, for example in INGO's who pick out the most successful youth leaders. This makes it difficult to establish sustainable youth structures. Indeed many of the organisations are centred around a strong leader. The strong personality and charisma of this person can attract and motivate other youth which can make an organisation successful, but can also sign the end of the organisation when the leader is leaving. This problem is not restricted to youth-organisations; all social movement organisations have a propensity to be unstable and consequently 'the success and failure of a social movement can be highly dependant on the qualities and commitment of leaders and the tactics they use.'[24] From what I have seen the leaders often are the only ones with the required skills to keep the organisation running. They lack the experience though to multiply these skills among their members and to delegate tasks. As a result the leaders do the bulk of the work and become indispensable for the organisation.

So we see that the dynamism earlier mentioned as an advantage of youth can also work counterproductive. This is also reflected in the desire of youth to initiate new initiatives instead of building on existing structures. Youth often want to own a new project or initiative and thereby ignore the advantages of joining already existing structures or campaigns. I often got lost in multiple organisations with comparable functions and names like: African network of young peacebuilders (ANYP), youth for peace in Africa (YPA), The African youth parliament (AYP), social forum for the MRU, MRU youth parliament, MRU youth organisation etcetera!

Funding, competition and relation with authorities

Although the many different youth organisations and their members form a kind of separate world and seem to interact in solidarity for their shared ideals, deeper investigation also reveals competition and problems of trust and jealousies. Many of these problems are born from the difficulties of finding funding for their projects. Practically all organisations have to find sponsors on project-base and are dependent on donors for their activities. Some organisations have attracted the attention from international donors or organisations like

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[24] T. Marks, *Young warriors*, 2001, p. 149.

Peace links that is supported by Kerken in Actie.[25] A few other international organisations like the UNDP initiate and fund their own youth structures (Social Forum for peace for youth of the MRU and Ivory Coast). Most youth organisations though are desperately trying to get into contact with Western donors to fund their projects. This sometimes creates tensions between organisations that might have similar projects but from which only one succeeds to find funds. For example the peace caravan the MRU youth parliament organised appeared to have also been planned by another youth organisation. Only, they didn't succeed to find funds and then accused the youth parliament of having stolen their idea for a peace caravan.

In general the ability to attract funds depends for a great deal on the networks and 'good name' of the youth organisation. This might even lead to some organisations becoming donor 'favourites', which enables them to attract high sums of funds for their projects. WAYN for example has established a good relationship with Osiwa (Open Society Initiative of West Africa), which has enabled them to organise a few good trainingconferences and to initiate the MRU youth parliament. This motivates other donors to invest in this organisation as well. Of course a lot also depends on the agenda of the donor organisations and the youth organisations try to adapt their projects to the most recent themes in order to be able to attract some funds.

Another strategy is to raise local funds and to get support from their governments. This is not easy even though youth ministries say to support youth initiatives. The little recognition of the value of youth initiatives by politicians (even the youth ministries itself have problems with their image) might be an effect of the traditional position of youth in African societies where they used to be subordinated to the elders until they had reached a certain economic level of independence. Apart from that, there are so many initiatives and youth organisations that do not survive the first year of their existence which makes that authorities first want to see results or prove of capability before engaging themselves with the youth organisation. This was clearly illustrated during the preparation of the peace caravan of the MRU youth parliament in Guinea. Although the minister of youth and sports reacted positively on our initiative it never materialised in real support. Only after we have returned from our peace caravan and started with the opening ceremony of the parliamentary session the minister sent someone to investigate on our needs and immediately provided a hotel and food for the next five days.

In that way good relationships with the government can help youth organisations with their activities, but engaging with the political level can also have negative effects. This was experienced also by the MRU youth parliament when the Liberian government suddenly decided that the Liberian delegation of the parliament was not legitimate and had to be replaced by youth selected by the youth ministry. The minister said not to have been informed about the existence of the youth parliament and the formation of the Liberian delegation, which was not true, but without their support it would be difficult to organise the next parliamentary session in Monrovia (Liberia). Some rumours say it is because of the support of Richelieu Allison (who selected the Liberian delegation) for George Weah's run

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[25] A Dutch NGO, see www.kerkinactie.nl.

for presidency in the upcoming elections that the actual government wants to obstruct his activities.[26] Already in 1998 Richelieu Allison was the target of the Taylor regime when his then organization, Voice of the Future (a child right group) published a report that the Government was training 500 child soldiers on a military base. As a result of this he had to go underground and another member had to leave the country. This incident shows the difficult relationship between youthgroups and governments that often see youth as a threat to their status quo and want to avoid the criticisms of the younger generation on their regimes. Despite such problems especially the regional youth organisations try to become recognised at the political level and lobby for participation of youth in decisionmaking processes.

Close affiliations with political bodies create also another threat: namely that the young generation will be sucked into and copy the same leadershipstyles of the older generation, which up till now have proved not to be very successful. This domain still needs a lot of research and poses a serious challenge for leadershiptrainings to come up with renewing leadershipstyles that are based on the public interest and integrity instead of on power, favouritism and personal enrichment.

Peer-to-peer: rolemodels

Despite the jealousies and competition that exists between youth groups, fellow youth are at the same time mentioned as the most important reason for them to join youth groups. They mention peers in youth organisations who were active in peacebuilding activities as inspiration to take up this work. They realise that peer-to-peer sensitisation is far more effective then adults preaching to youth. It is especially the task for youth to motivate other youth and get them off the fence. Most of the youth are of the view that engaging the young generation in gainful activities is the most important thing at this moment. They have to change the mindset of other youth and empower them to be active members of their communities. They think they can play an important role in motivating and sensitising their fellow youth; they can be counsellors for the younger ones.

I think we can conclude from this that active youth are the best motivators for their fellow-youth to become active as well and that they function as role models for other youth and children. De Waal recognises this by arguing that the best way to reach children is through the youth and that any campaign for children must be led by young people themselves to be effective.[27] In the article 'Peer relationships and children's understanding of peace and war' Hagglund tries to assess the effect of peer relationships on children's understanding of peace and war. Even though it is difficult to measure the unique effect of the peer relationships in a complex social setting where many more factors influence the children, some studies indicate that peer relationships do influence developmental outcomes.[28] Especially during middle childhood and adolescence peer relationships are an important part of the social reality of

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[26] George Weah is a famous and very popular Liberian footballer. For more information see page 74.
[27] A. de Waal in A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002, p. 3.
[28] S. Hagglund, *Peer relationships and children's understanding of peace and war*, 1999.

Example of how youth can function as a rolemodel

Emile Toby, a student in Freetown, Sierra Leone, South Africa, wrote to **MY HERO** about his teacher hero, Andrew Greene: *'My hero is Andrew Greene. Andrew Greene is the IEARN*[29] *Sierra Leone volunteer coordinator. As war affected, me as a child myself, I enrolled in Andrew's informal school of ICT and English, and was a participant in IEARN activities. I have been inspired by my leader's unwavering service to giving voices to youths affected by war who could otherwise have not been recognized. Today, I can write to a friend in Ghana, or Morocco, or the US telling him/her about what effects the war has on my life through the power of the internet. I can now go back to school having paid my fees because of some support that the internet friends have brought me. When I lost my father, and my mother abandoned me, not by fault, but fleeing for her life, I had no hopes of recovery, no hopes of food, health, education etc. Through the association with IEARN that Andrew brought us, today there is hope. Andrew hires a bus for us when he can afford it, take us to internet centers, and pays out of his own pocket for us all to learn. When he can't afford bus fare for all of us war-affected children, he walks with us for a few miles to the city center to get on the internet or learn computer skills. He hunts for funding for our education, he lobbies with the government education ministry to house the recycled computers that he has managed to get to Freetown, so that we will all gain and share in the experience. He loves us and cares for those who do not have the means to go and pay the high prices at private computer schools…His dream is to open up a community access center for us, the war-affected youths, and help us acquire the skills to cope and join in the computer job competitions. There are many things that I can say about my hero, but these will suffice.'*

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the child. Peer relations become more important than those of the family and adolescents feel an overwhelming need for social acceptance.[30] Expressed by one of the respondents:

> *One very important thing is peer-group communication. If a young person talks to another young person about responsibilities roles, peace, human rights issues, that person will listen to me. […] they take it more serious then with elderly people. That's why we young people thought it necessary for us to disseminate the information to our colleagues, so that the next generation will live in a peaceful world where war and violence cease to be accepted.* (Mohammed Sillah Sesay, Sierra Leone)

Especially youth-groups working with new communication-technologies like internet and video, attract a lot of youth and the leaders of these groups are seen as 'heroes', as can be witnessed on the site www.myhero.com where people from all over the world can write a short story about their hero (see box).

Girls

Even though the majority of the young peacebuilders are young men there are also quite some girls active in the youth organisations. The girls acknowledge that they are in general less active then the boys, but they see a changing trend in which girls dare to stand up more

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[29] IEARN: International Education and Resource Network, a very popular youth organisation using new communication technologies.

[30] Y. Hebert, *Identity, diversity and education*, 2001.

and more. According to them it is often insecurity of girls that prevents them of becoming active. Traditionally they are not expected to speak up and are therefore not used to focus attention on themselves as illustrated by the following remark of one of the girls participating in the trainingconference in Freetown:

> *Girls tend to shy away from authority, especially in Liberia now. Maybe we should say it is an age-old concept about male domination, they still have that feeling that the boys are 'it'. They know everything so let them go ahead and do it. We will be in the background, but we can't take the full responsibility.*
> (Nowiah Gorpudolo, Liberia)

Little girls can be found in executive functions, even though it is changing slowly now. For girls it is even more difficult to find support for this kind of work within their family. Where boys are already confronted with incomprehensive family-members that don't see the value of the voluntary work, girls have to fight even harder to be allowed to travel and invest their time in peacebuilding activities from which the effect can not be immediately seen or translated into money. Most of the conferences organised for youth pay attention though to gender equality and the girls that do participate are very strong and self-confident women. The special attention for women-organisations can also provide a structure for involvement of girls. Women-organisations like the MRU Women's Peace Network can function as an incentive for girls to become engaged.

ICT's and globalisation

African youth are increasingly drawn into the global media stream and information and communication technologies (ICT's) constitute a promising area for youth. They offer African youth the opportunity to bring their views and perspectives to a wider audience, to communicate with each other as well as with people and youth on the other side of the globe. Youth will be the major players in linking the continent to the information highway (see box on following page for an example of an ICT-project).

However, Africa is still finding itself at the wrong side of the digital divide, which hampers the development of the new 'literacy' in information and communications technology, as Bridges-Palmer states. At present there is less than one computer per 1000 people in sub-Saharan Africa.[31] A major challenge to effectively making use of ICT-facilities is illiteracy, mainly in rural communities. Also government policies inhospitable to ICT-development can be an obstacle, which has to be countered in order to invest in the development of information infrastructure and its applications. It is very important that all people can participate in and profit from the Information age.

Access to internet is generally restricted to the youth in the capital and a few other big cities. Rural and marginalized youth don't have access to computers, which means that it can't be used yet as a medium for dialogue and contact. Still, for the youthgroups in the capital it is a valuable medium. Especially the bigger youth groups with affiliate groups or contacts in neighbouring countries are dependent on the internet for contact and are active

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[31] J. Bridges-Palmer in A. de Waal and N. Argenti, *Young Africa*, 2002, p. 99.

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example of ICT-project involving youth

The international Development Research Centre has decided to use ICT's to accelerate development in Sub Sahara Africa. One of their programmes is Alpid: a youth leadership program for information and communication technologies and community development in Africa. Youth are trained in ICT-skills and community based development and will then be partners in implementing the use of ICT's in local communities. They have already established youth-to-community programs in which adults learn IT-skills from younger members of their societies. In this way youth can be employed as vehicles of change and will become role models. The programmes of the IDRC combine the ICT training with a leadership training for the skilled youth volunteers who will be involved in various management roles in the program. They see it as an important goal to use ICT's in a responsible and sustainable way to fill the information gap that has occurred due to the disappearance of indigenous information systems and networks.[32]

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users of yahoo and hotmail accounts. Due to the costs of serving on the web, their internet activities are mostly restricted to mailservers and some newssites.

The online course provided by the Network University (Amsterdam), which preceded the conference in Freetown, was one of the first pilots to work with internet as a learning environment. Although most participants were enthusiastic about this medium, thrilled about the quick contact with fellow students on the other side of the earth, they experienced quite some difficulties with using internet so intensively. Most of them had to pay for their hours online in an internet café and were bothered by frequent power cuts. Still, internet can be a powerful medium to bring youth into contact with the rest of the world, like we can see with the example of IEARN (see hero box).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have seen that most literature written on the role of youth in conflict either focuses on the victim-role of children and youth or on the role of youth as perpetrators and motors of civil conflict. Young people are easily influenced and therefore often victim of instrumentalisation; ironically enough their potential is in most cases only recognised by rebel forces or military people. Mostly, and very clearly in the case of Sierra Leone, it is a complete lack of opportunities in all spheres of life (educational, economical, political) that forces youth to choose for violence as an alternative way to give meaning to their lives.

But also after the conflict it is hard for youth to find meaningful activities and a place in a society where they are rather marginalised then included. Young people are generally not recognised as fully-fledged actors and are hardly included in decision-making processes.

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[32] O. Ogbu and P. Mihyo, International Development Research Centre, *African youth on the information highway – Participation and leadership in community development*, 2000.

This while it can be argued that the inclusion of youth in the peacebuildling process will be essential for the long-term success and sustainability of peace in their country. Arguments given for this are the fact that the youth are going to be the future leaders and that youth constitute a majority of most African societies. Including them will create a broader base for the peace-process and will as well be an opportunity for youth to practise and develop their (leadership)skills. At the same time youth are the most dynamic part of society which is a very useful characteristic especially in this age of globalisation where rapid changes and new technologies are putting an extreme pressure on developing countries to keep track without loosing their own culture.

The fact that most youthgroups are not recognised by the governments as capable partners might be an effect of the traditional position of youth in African societies where they used to be subordinated to the elders. Even youth ministries have problems with their image and are usually badly equipped to support or set up youthstructures. Some youth try to change this and are advocating for their rights to participate in the reshaping of their society through youth organisations. From my visit to the youth training conference in Freetown it has become clear that a certain group of youth are taking their responsibility and try to do whatever they can to rebuild their society. They are engaged in peacebuilding activities in a wide range; promoting peace education and reconciliation, sensitisation of youth on issues like HIV, human rights and advocacy, creating job-opportunities and lobbying for more participation in decisionmaking processes. These peacebuilding organisations often form a pathway for youth to a new identity and new opportunities. Training conferences allow them to travel and to meet other young people all over Africa. These youth are generally very well informed, critical of the current situation in their home country and doing most of their work voluntarily. Even girls are often very active members of these organisations, combining their peacebuilding activities with the fight against traditional role-patterns and expectations from their family and society.

However, we should also not idealise the role youth are playing at this moment. We should keep in mind that it is probably a small proportion of all the youth in the country and they face a lot of challenges. Obviously funding is a major obstacle. There is no structural support available for youth organisations, which means that they have to compete for support from donors and ministries. This not only creates tension between the different youth groups but also puts them in a ambivalent relationship with the authorities. They are dependent on the governments to get support and to be allowed to participate in decisionmaking processes, but at the same time they have to be careful not to be the victim of political games and copying the bad sides of the leadership of the older generation. Other problems that youth organisations face are the temporality of youth; young people are moving, thinking of their own careers and therefore often only work for a youth organisation for a certain period of time. Combined with the fact that many youth organisations are built around a strong leader, this makes it difficult to build sustainable structures. Especially because youth prefer to be the owner of their own, new initiative rather then building on existing structures.

But even though it might be a small group of youth that is actually engaged in peace-building activities, they have a very important function in providing opportunities for peers

to find a place in society. Youth active in youth groups are often rolemodels for other youth and children. They have the best chances of motivating and involving their peers in peace-building activities or helping to find them, including ex-combatants, a new meaningful role in society.

Chapter 5. Diaspora youth

Transnational bridge?

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation, as said before, has increased the interconnectedness of the globe on several levels and enables people to travel but also settle all over the world. Although globalisation and the emergence of Diasporas are not causally connected, they 'go together extraordinarily well', as Cohen puts it.[1] Migration is bound with globalisation and will not cease to exist in the near future. Economic restructuring, demographic changes within Europe (growing percentage of older people), conflicts, natural disasters and human rights abuses only seem to point to a continuation and possibly intensification of migration in the coming years. This will lead to a growing importance of transnational communities that connect their societies of origin with the societies of settlement.[2]

In this chapter we will take a look at the youth from Sierra Leone and Liberia living in the Netherlands. The chapter starts with a theoretic outline of the African Diaspora and its potential for peacebuilding, whereafter we will see what the actual ideas and contributions in peacebuilding are of the Sierra Leonean and Liberian youth here in the Netherlands.

LITERATURE

Defining the (African) Diaspora

Although most people agree that the present level of globalisation is higher then ever and displays some distinctive features, globalisation itself is not new. Africa has a long history of people leaving the continent, which is inextricably bound up with the slave trade and colonisation. The concept of the African Diaspora is consequently linked to the slave trade

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[1] R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 1997, p. 175.
[2] Basch et all (1994) define 'transnationalism' as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. They call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. Quoted by O. Wahlbeck in: *The concept of Diaspora as an analytical tool in the study of refugee communities*, 2002.

and the communities formed in the 'New world'. The nature and composition of the African Diaspora have undergone significant changes since the slave trade: from forced migration to the voluntary emigration of free, skilled Africans but also 'forced' migration in search of political asylum because of protracted conflicts in the homeland.

Originally the term Diaspora derives from the historic experience of dispersal of the Jewish people, but presently the term is commonly used for communities not living in their home country, even though there are many debates on the exact meaning of Diaspora. At the level of general theories of the Diaspora the most commonly cited work is that of Safran (1991), Clifford (1994) and Cohen (1997). Safran provides a six-point list of criteria for defining an 'ideal-type Diaspora':

1. Ancestors have been dispersed
2. They retain a collective memory, or myth about their original homeland
3. They believe they are not fully accepted by their host society
4. They regard their homeland as their ideal home
5. They believe that they should be committed to the maintenance of their original homeland
6. They continue to relate to that homeland[3]

James Clifford argued that Safran builds his model too exclusively upon the Jewish experience and although he acknowledges that Diasporic communities may exhibit two or more features of Safrans criteria, he regards this as a far more dynamic process, which can change over time.[4] Cohen has added that not all Diasporas are involuntary and has made the following typology for different kinds of Diasporas: victim, labour, imperial, trade and cultural Diasporas.

George Shepperson was one of the first scholars to start a dialogue on the African Diaspora (around 1965), but he concentrated primarily on the slave trade and imperialism and did hardly take account of the many aspects of voluntary migrations. Joseph Harris gave a more inclusive definition of the African Diaspora in 1982:

> The global dispersion (voluntary and involuntary) of Africans throughout history; the emergence of cultural identity abroad based on origin and social condition; and the psychological or physical return to the homeland, Africa …[5]

The dynamic nature of the African Diaspora is shown by the fact that the African Diaspora is generally categorised as a victim Diaspora, while the victim label better suits those exported from Africa as slaves than it does the 'contemporary' African Diaspora. The 'neo-Diaspora' is largely a rational response to economic hardship and political turmoil or is forced in the case of refugees fleeing from persecution and conflict. This is not the only way in which the neo-Diaspora differs from the traditional African Diaspora. The information and transport technologies make interactions much easier and cheaper for the new Diasporas, which

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[3] W. Safran in: *Africans in the Diaspora*, quoted by E. Akyeampong, 2000, pp. 184–185.
[4] J. Clifford, *Diasporas*, 1994.
[5] Harris in: *Conceptualising the African Diaspora*, quoted by C. Wilson, 1997, p. 119.

can enhance a Diaspora's sense of community. As Mohan and Zack-Williams state as well, Diasporas are very much 'imagined communities' in Anderson's (1991) terms, but unlike nation-states they lack territorial integrity and political sovereignty.[6]

Diaspora and identity

Processes of migration and exile offer diverse and complex environments for the renegotiation of social identities. Immigrants and refugees have to adapt to a new environment where they come into contact with new groups and cultures. They are often removed from their familiar social networks and their previous identities may be of little meaning or relevance in the new society.

Globalisation has led to an increasing process of deterritorialisation of social identity. In the debate about identity Mohan and Zack-Williams identify a broad split between those who see a relatively coherent and largely racialised identity and those 'anti-essentialists' who see identities as multiple, provisional and dynamic.[7] Although it is true that Diasporac identities are socially and historically constituted and dynamic, it is also important to see that this articulation is constrained by contextual forces, such as race, gender and economics. What is always central to Diasporic identities is the notion of exile and the complex relationship with the home country. As Skinner explains there is anger and bitterness among the exiles over the reasons that made them flee their country while at the same time they have to defend their home country to the dominant host that often displays contempt for the homelands of the migrants.[8] The migrants often have a subordinate status in the new environment and the issues of return causes tension between all three groups: migrants, host and home country. Exile can also strengthen one's attachment to 'home' even if one never returns there. The persistent and growing ethnic polarisation in the USA and Western Europe are likely to enforce the symbolic significance of 'Africa' as home.[9]

The globalisation of the world is by some expected to lead to a unification of cultures worldwide. However, unlike those who argue that a singly homogenized global culture is emerging, Perlmutter suggests that rather 'multiple cultures are being syncretized in a complex way.'[10] The elements of particular cultures can be drawn from a global array, but they will mix and match differently in each setting: a local interpretation of global aspects. Counter tendencies to globalisation like ethnicity, fundamentalism or racism are part of the fragmentation and multiplication of identities. According to Wahlbeck (2002) the contemporary processes of globalisation and transnationalism do not diminish the importance of ethnicity; on the contrary, ethnicity acquires a new significance. He sees as one major contemporary change that the connection between ethnicity and locality has become blurred. 'Ethnicity, once a genie

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[6] G. Mohan and A.B. Zack-Williams, *Globalisation from below*, 2002, p. 215.
[7] G. Mohan and A.B. Zack-Williams, *Globalisation from below*, 2002, pp. 217–218.
[8] E.P. Skinner, *The dialectic between Diasporas and homelands*, 1982.
[9] G. Mohan and A.B. Zack-Williams, *Globalisation from below*, 2002, p. 215
[10] Perlmutter in *Global Diasporas*, quoted by Cohen, 1997, p. 174.

contained in the bottle of some sort of locality (however large), has now become a global force, forever slipping in and through the cracks between states and borders' (Appadurai, 1996).[11]

Cohen suggests that Diasporas are in a particularly good position to act as a bridge between the particular and the universal.[12] Many members of Diaspora communities are bi- or multi-langual, they are sensitive to the currents around them, they can spot what is missing in the host societies, which makes them generally good traders. Cosmopolitanism goes together though with ethnic collectivism and traditional cultural values, which sustain solidarity. Diasporas are thus outside and inside a particular national society. They are out-siders as well as participants and are able to compare and learn from how things are done in other societies. This points to a dual and often simultaneous process of identification with the home and host countries.

E. Akyeampong states that global capitalism and the demand for labour in the West have turned the Diaspora into an important economic and political resource base for Africans and as well as 'a stage for redefining one's social identity.'[13] Going abroad in Africa has become entwined with the notion of going to 'seek one's fortune'. Constraints on social mobility in Europe though have led to the description of London as 'the leveller'. All class distinctions African immigrants brought from their homelands were erased when competing for the same menial jobs. In that sense the Diaspora is also an important space to remake one's self, even to overcome the social liabilities of birth. The successful migrant returns home as an 'upper class' citizen, respected for his wealth.

The described leveller-experience is not always the dominant experience though. Rather, class often seems to determine whether someone can migrate at all and to which extent migrants can exploit opportunities in the host-country. For the less successful migrants the discrepancy with the image of the 'triumphant return' creates a lot of tension and makes a premature return a deterrence. Often the decision to go abroad is not purely an individual choice, but is a decision based within the family and part of diversification of income-generating activities. This enforces the obligation on the migrant to succeed and to send money back to those left behind.

Exile can also be 'the nursery of nationality' as stated by Acton.[14] Kaiser gives an example of this by describing how Burundians in the Diaspora try to overcome subnational claims to ethnic citizenship and rebuild a national community from afar, while in their home country the subnational ethnic identities of the Hutus and Tutsis are dissolving a common national identity.[15] The Burundians in the Diaspora 'are united in their desire to resolve the crisis in

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[11] A. Appadurai in: *The concept of Diaspora as an analytical tool in the study of refugee communities*, quoted by O. Wahlbeck 2002.
[12] R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 1997, p. 170.
[13] E. Akyeampong, *Africans in the Diaspora*, 2000, p. 186.
[14] Acton in: *Long-distance nationalism*, quoted by B.R. O'G. Anderson, 1992, p. 2.
[15] R.M. Kadende-Kaiser and P.J. Kaiser, *Identity, citizenship and transnationalism*, 1998.

Burundi and to negotiate the reformulation of a national identity in a transnational context that is dedicated to understanding and resolving the civil war at home.'[16] The reformulation of their identities happened for a great part through an internet group site which enabled them to share information and engage in cross-ethnic dialogue. Their similarities are based on their being abroad and on their relatively high educational levels. The authors bring this in relation with Appadurai's five dimensions of the global cultural economy and specifically with the 'technoscape' in which technologies create imagined worlds. The Burundian internet case suggests that the creation of Appadurai's imagined worlds offers interesting possibilities for conflict resolution and the long-distance development of national identities. Information technology can create the environment for the negotiation of a Diasporic national identity that replaces subnational ethnic identities.

Apart from national identities the African Diaspora has also been a stage for developing a strong racial identity through Pan-Africanism. The Pan-Africanist movement emerged in the 19th century among intellectuals of African descent in North-America and the Caribbean who thought of themselves as members of a single, 'negro', race.[17] In the 20th century, however, this way of thinking of African identity in racial terms has been challenged. In particular, the intellectuals born in Africa who took over the movement's leadership in the period after the World War II developed a more geographical idea of African identity.

In its most straightforward version, Pan-Africanism is the political project calling for the unification of all Africans into a single African state, to which those in the African Diaspora can return. So in the Pan-Africanist discourse the homeland is not just a nation state, but an entire continent. William Ackah desribes Pan-Africanism as in essence being a movement by Africans for Africans in response to European ideas of superiority and acts of imperialism.[18] Pan-Africanism was a universal expression of black pride and achievement as a defence against the white domination and dehumanisation of black people.

The spiritual idea of return to Africa, Africa seen as the motherland, has been a strong feature of black cultural identity in the Diaspora.[19] Pan-Africanism inspired a notion of return and an obligation to ones brothers and sisters, even though the actual physical numbers of people returning have been very low. The liberation struggles from colonisation have also been an important theme of Pan-Africanism. Entwined with the struggle for the liberation of the African continent was the ideal of unity in the form of political an economic unification, which became dominant in Pan-Africanism after the Second World War. The goal of continental unity was driven by the vision of Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana (1957) who believed that a unitary radical socialist government was the only way for Africa after colonialism. Pan-African unity also encompasses the wider ideal of uni-

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[16] R.M. Kadende-Kaiser and P.J. Kaiser, *Identity, citizenship and transnationalism*, 1998, p. 462.

[17] Main Pan-african activists were Marcus Garvey and Du Bois.

[18] W.B. Ackah, *Pan-africanism*, 1999.

[19] This spiritual idea of return has been expressed in various forms of Ethiopianism, notably Rastafarianism in the 20th century, as explained by W.B. Ackah (1999), p. 15.

versal black brotherhood, with Africa being the home for all people of African descent. Why this strong ideal has up till now not been able to unite and transform the continent is a question that goes beyond the scope of this research.[20]

Growing influence of transnational communities on conflicts

With the increase of transnational communities and Diasporas, the 'Diasporic component' in contemporary conflict has also become increasingly important. The most important reasons for this are explained by J. Demmers.[21] Firstly there is the rise of a new pattern of conflict in which identity groups have become central. Identity groups within states that are in conflict often lack formal international representation and therefore largely depend upon their dispersed members in the Diaspora for external support. Secondly there has been a rapid rise of war refugees. Conflicts in which soldiers took the biggest share of war related deaths have been replaced by civil conflicts in which the civilians are the primary victims. As a consequence great numbers of refugees try to leave the country and contribute to rapidly growing Diasporas. A third reason is the increased speed of communication and mobility. Communication technologies and quick transportation modes make people in the Diaspora increasingly capable of sustaining relations with their societies of origin. Fourthly there is a rise of xenophobia in host countries in Western Europe. It becomes increasingly hard to settle in host countries because of strict asylum policies and xenophobic tendencies in 'Fort Europe'. This makes it more likely for Diasporas to focus on their home country and maintain close relationships with their ancestral homelands.

Most existing literature about the role of Diaspora communities focuses on the negative role of Diasporas in conflicts back home. As they have mostly more access to financial resources Diaspora communities can 'fund and fuel' conflicts in their homecountries. Apart from the provision of financial resources Diasporas also play an important role in setting the terms of debate around issues of conflict and identity.[22] They often have greater access to the media and the time, resources, and freedom than actors in the conflicted homeland. The fact that Diaspora communities are engaged in the conflict by 'long-distance participation', influences their attitudes towards the conflict. They are engaged in a sort of 'virtual conflicts' in which 'they live their conflicts through the internet, email, television and telephone without direct (physical) suffering, risks, or accountability.'[23] This, as Lyons explains, makes Diaspora communities in general more extreme in their views of the conflict and their uncompromising positions often constrain the ability of actors in the homeland to engage in constructive

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[20] Ackah (1999) explains that some critics say Pan-Africanism replaced the big white myth with a black one. In the attempts to prove the black worth to the white world, there was no space anymore to look critical at their own leaders and accomplishments. Another problem might be that for long periods of its development Pan-Africansim existed outside of the continent. The concerns of the African Diaspora and the African elites are not the same as the concerns of the African masses, which is mainly survival and not 'race'.

[21] J. Demmers, *Nationalism from without*, 2005.

[22] T. Lyons, *Notes on globalisation, Diasporas and conflict*, 2003.

[23] J. Demmers, *Diaspora and Conflict, 2002*

conflict resolution.[24] This is also fed by the strong emotional attachment and the romanticized images of the homeland that accompanies the symbolic importance of the homeland for people in the Diaspora.

Development, brain drain and peacebuilding

There is little literature to be found on the role of African Diaspora's in conflicts in their home country, although Ellis argues that Pan-Africanism has had an influence on the conflicts in West-Africa through their ideology of uniting the African continent, which has been radicalised by warlords as Charles Taylor (Liberia) and Foday Sankoh (Sierra Leone).[25] Equally hard is it to find information on peacebuilding activities from (African) Diaspora communities. The close link between peacebuilding and development activities can help us further though, as there is growing interest for the role of Diaspora communities in development issues.[26]

Recently attention has been given to the high amount of remittances that are annually sent back by migrants to familymembers. These are far higher than the annual amount of official developmental aid (migrants in 2001 sent 72 milliard dollar to their homecountries, while the official development support was 50 milliard dollar) and are an important incentive for the development of local communities.[27] A report from the World Bank indicates that remittances to Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, have received little attention, partly because *officially recorded* flows are relatively low.[28] Africa as a whole accounted for about 15 percent of total remittances to developing countries in 2002 ($80 billion); the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa received just one-third of the African total. Most remittances to Africa over the past decade were received in North Africa (72 percent), followed by East Africa (13 percent), and Southern and West Africa (7 and 5 percent). In Sub-Saharan Africa the single largest receiver was Nigeria, which receives between 30 and 60 percent of remittances to the Sub-Saharan region. The same report emphasizes though that remittances to Africa are nevertheless an important financial flow – with significant developmental effects (see next page for leading uses of remittances). Moreover, their level is probably much higher than official data indicate. Many transactions go unrecorded or unreported, in large part because financial systems and services are weak in much of Africa.

The recognition of the positive effect of the remittances of migrants can be seen as a first step towards linking development-issues with migration-phenomena, which is still hardly done. Already in 1995 academics (notably Zack-Williams) tried to bridge the gap between development studies, with its emphasis on political economy, and Diasporic studies that were

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[24] T. Lyons, *Notes on globalisation, Diasporas and conflict*, 2003.

[25] S. Ellis, *War in West Africa*, 2001, p. 34.

[26] Developmental work and peacebuilding have long been separate disciplines, but they are more and more being linked. A recent publication, *Postconflict development – meeting new challenges*, edited by Gerd Junne and Willemijn Verkoren (2005) is one of the attemps to bridge the gap between the two fields.

[27] Internationale Samenwerking, *Migranten zijn perfecte donoren (migrants are perfect donors)*, February 2004.

[28] C. Sander and S.M. Maimbo (World Bank), *Migrant labor remittances in Africa*, November 2003.

Leading Uses of Remittances

Studies show that most remittances are used for:

– Daily needs and expenses (70–90 percent of remittances), typically labeled as consumption or
  as improving the recipients' standard of living

– Health-related expenses and education, often grouped with consumption when seen as improv-
  ing the standard of living

– Consumer durables (stereos, televisions, washing machines)

– Improvement or acquisition of housing, purchases of land or livestock

– Sociocultural investment (birth, marriage, pilgrimage, death)

– Loan repayments (often loans to pay for cost of migration)

– Savings

– Income- or employment-generating activities

Source: Sander and Maimbo [World Bank],
Migrant labor remittances in Africa, November 2003.

situated within the tradition of cultural studies.[29] And several years later the same authors
are trying to brigde the gap with their article 'Globalisation from below – Conceptualising
the role of the African Diasporas in Africa's development.' They state that very few studies
examine 'the role that Diasporic networks play in the well being of both the Diaspora itself
and Africans on the continent.'[30]

Gradually though actors in the developmental domain are starting to realise that migra-
tion does not exclusively have negative effects on host- and homecountries. More and more
governments and institutions start to realise that they can make use of the vast pool of talent
in the Diaspora; a phenomenon that is usually only referred to in negative sense as 'brain
drain'. The brain drain is a serious problem for the African continent, but it is useful to also
take a look at the positive sides of this phenomenon. Although the brain drain is damaging
in the short-term, 'in the longer-term emigrants help open new markets to African prod-
ucts and bring back badly needed financial resources and new political and technological
ideas. A key lesson is that emigrants may not return permanently but can make a dramatic
difference by returning intermittently to be involved in development projects, charities and
business ventures.'[31] The positive consequences of an African Diaspora will be more apparent
if the Diaspora is seen as a human network through which new ideas, capital and technol-
ogy flow back to the continent. Although most emigrants will not return, especially not the
highly skilled professionals for whom personal ambition and the substantial wage gap make

[29] A. Zack-Williams, *Development and Diaspora: separate concerns?*, September 1995, pp. 349–358.
[30] G. Mohan and A. Zack-Williams, *Globalisation from below*, 2002.
[31] EAfrica, *The African Diaspora – The Medicine for what ails Africa*, September 2003.

a return very unattractive, their skills can still be used through temporary workvisits, invest-
ments and business initiatives in the home country. There are even some students and pre-
viously unskilled Africans that return with management experience or other skills in a wide
variety of industries, with new ideas and practices that improve the effectiveness of African
business. Offering incentives to nationals abroad to come back home, either temporarily or
permanent, could stimulate this process.

Source: EAfrica. The electronic journal of governance and innovation, vol. 1, September 2003.

Diaspora capital

Although individual remittances to family members make up an important part of Diaspo-
ras' contributions, African Diaspora *organisations* are also playing an increasingly important
role in linking the Diaspora to African development. These organisations can range from
hometown associations, to religious associations, ethnic associations or virtual organisa-
tions. There are a few NGO's who want to support this process and who are trying to promote
the involvement of Diaspora Africans in the development of the African continent. Afford,
an UK based NGO, is one of the major actors in Europe in this domain and in the Netherlands
Afroneth Foundation is working on the same issues.[32] These organisations try to expand
and enhance African Diasporas' contribution to Africa's development. They want to engage
Africans and their organisations in the Diaspora directly with organisations involved in the
processes of development on the continent; and to develop the skills and abilities of African
peoples, either temporarily or permanently away from Africa, in ways that will contribute

[32] Afroneth Foundation is an African Diaspora organisation in the Netherlands, founded in 2003. See for more
information: www.afroneth.nl.

to Africa's development. They do this through supporting Diaspora based African organisations working for Africa's development, by promoting linkages between Africans abroad and mainstream development actors and by promoting development linkages between Africans in the Diaspora and Africans at home. They have found that Africans are active but marginalized from mainstream development thinking and practice. Their knowledge about the continent and expertise is hardly used by policy development and NGO's.

The capital of Diaspora communities can be classified into four areas: political capital (lobbying, advocacy) social capital (social relations, networks, trust), intellectual capital (knowledge, skills, ideas) and financial capital (remittances, investment, consumers African products). Evidence from work on refugees (Al Ali, Black and Koser, 1999) suggests that Diaspora communities can play an active role in lobbying and advocacy free from the restrictive human rights abuses of their home countries. Although far from perfect, their Diasporic location may permit them the political space to lobby against repressive regimes. Mohan and Willams give the example of the current media activity against the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe, which is being orchestrated from South London.[33]

Social relations with the home country and networks with the broader Diaspora can serve as valuable starting points for trade and businesses as well as for aid-projects. The Diaspora can also lobby in the hostcountry on issues relating to the ancestral home. The intellectual domain includes highly educated and experienced Africans leaving the continent because of lack of opportunities there. Their experience with the African continent combined with their high level of education can be valuable for policy makers and NGOs working in Africa. There are also African students coming to Europe to study after which they will return to the African continent. These young people can also be potential bridgebuilders between the Diaspora and the African continent. The importance of remittances has already been discussed before. Remittances are not restricted to person-to-person transfers of money but can also include the transfer of consumer goods and even larger items such as cars, mainly to family, immediate and extended. More organised financial support like community-to-community transfers is still small, however Afroneth Foundation is developing an African Diaspora Trust Fund.

One of the first studies on the role of African Diasporas in peacebuilding and governance by Afroneth, gives an overview of the potential added value of Diaspora Africans.[34] To start with they have the advantage of better communication with their home country because of their understanding of local language, culture, traditions, norms and values. Additionally they can use their personal and political networks in Africa, eg with elders, religious leaders and decision-makers. They may have acquired some experience with democratic processes in the West like good governance and respect for the rule of law, which can be transferred back home. With social and technical skills they acquired in Europe, they can fill gaps in local peace processes through innovative approaches and methods, including multi-media, training of peace promoters, assistance during elections, training of civil society, sports

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[33] G. Mohan and A. Zack-Williams, *Globalisation from below*, 2002, p. 231.
[34] A. Tola (Afroneth), *Peacebuilding and governance programme in 5 African countries*, December 2003.

and a central role for women and youth groups in peace promotion. In the hostcountry Diaspora groups can organise campaigning and lobbying on post conflict issues and provide fund raising services. Also they can give good example by reconciling in Europe and thus providing a role model for reconciliation back home.[35]

The ability to respond to crisis in the homecountries is shaped by several factors. Al-Ali et al (1999) identify the following factors: economic factors (employment status in the hostcountry, access to information, access to banking facilities), political factors (level of political consciousness, secure legal status) and social factors (educational level, availability of structures in their hometowns, successful social integration in host country).[36] One of the key dimensions is the degree of integration within the host society. If the migrant lacks the right to work and/or faces routine hostility from the host society, he is less likely to be able to afford to send financial support home. The legal status of the migrant or refugee is also crucial, because if they are illegal or awaiting residency status, they are in a weak position to organise support for others. A further influence is the existence and awareness of organisations dedicated to such activities.

Despite the advantages that Diaspora communities have compared to the people in their home country, these home country factors appear to generally pose serious constraints on their efforts. Research executed by Africarecruit concludes that 'African Diasporas still operate at the margins in the host societies because of the weak social, economic and political position they find themselves in the new homeland.'[37] Most organisations established by the African Diasporas suffer from severe capacity constraints. They lack the capacity to make their activities more visible to the wider public, their social organisation is weak and they lack the channels to have access to useful information and networks. There is also a chance that they might repeat the earlier mistakes made by development organisations by funding projects whose sustainability and accountability are not guaranteed. A study from Trager (2001) also shows that much of this philanthropic activity relates to improving ones status and success.[38] Next to those restraints on the side of the hostcountry, the impact of Diaspora engagement in the home regions is also not always equally positive. Remittances have also had negative effects in fuelling unsustainable consumption and imports when the money goes to buy items not produced locally. The evidence suggests though that most remittances are used to invest in human capital through paying for healthcare and education (see box on page 58).[39] Apart from the tangible contributions they make, Diaspora involvement can be a great motivation for the people back home. The commitment and energy of Diaspora groups can lift up the spirits and hope of members of their respective communities.[40] Interestingly enough research shows that successful Diasporaprojects often involve local counterparts.[41]

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[35] A. Tola (Afroneth), *Peacebuilding and governance programme in 5 African countries*, December 2003.
[36] Al Ali e.a. in: *Globalisation and Development*, quoted by Afford, May 2000.
[37] Commonwealth Business Council, Africarecruit, *African Diaspora and development of Africa*, GSSA, December 2003.
[38] Trager in: *Globalisation from below*, quoted by G. Mohan and A. Zack-Williams, 2002.
[39] Afford, *Globalisation and development*, May 2000.
[40] C. Ndofor-Tah (Afford), *Diaspora and development*, September 2000.
[41] C. Ndofor-Tah (Afford), *Diaspora and development*, September 2000.

The combination of local and Diaspora knowledge seems to be one of the ways to constructive development.

Diaspora youth

Most African Diaspora communities are demographically young, especially the recent refugee Diasporas which have a majority of young men. In the UK there is a growing number of young Africans either born in the UK or otherwise, who, compared to the older generation, lack direct engagement with Africa. Afford has recognised the importance of the youth in their programme: *Foundations for Africa's future: harnessing the passion and skills of young Africans in the Diaspora.* They state that many young Africans in the Diaspora are committed, enthusiastic, serious and skilled. They have done a research to explore the dreams and aspirations of young people of African origin in the Diaspora (UK) in relation to Africa's development.[42] Key findings of the research were that the majority would like to be more involved in Africa's development by working or volunteering with UK-based African organisations. More ad hoc forms of engagement such as contributing cash or kind to family in Africa is less popular, although that is the major way in which they are involved in Africa's development presently. Four major obstacles facing them in relation to practical involvement are time constraints, financial constraints, lack of knowledge on African issues and where to get involved and lack of trust that their contribution will be used for the right purposes. To deal with the financial constraints Afford recommends fundraising at events that are interesting for young people like parties, sports or arts. Another important implication is that the information gap has to be filled and that youth should be better informed about seminars, opportunities and ongoing activities and projects. One practical recommendation is the establishment of factfinding institutions on the ground in Africa that would provide information on projects ongoing in Africa, the extent to which Africans on the continent are contributing to the project, how much more and what kinds of support is needed from Africans in the Diaspora. The youth need to make links with young African organisations on the continent to get a clearer picture of what they can offer and what the mutual expectations are.

THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND

African Diaspora in the Netherlands[43]

With the collapse of many African states, mainly due to civil strife, tens of thousands of Africans were forced to migrate and part of them can be found back in the Netherlands, either as refugees, but also as migrant workers. Most of them arrived after the 1980's when economic stagnation and violent conflicts in Africa were on their top. In 2002 there were

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[42] S.A.S. Opoku – Owusu, (Africa21, Afford), *Shaping Africa's future*, July 2003.
[43] When talking about Africa I refer to Sub-Sahara Africa unless stated otherwise.

some 180.000 Africans living in the Netherlands (This is a small figure compared to the US where we can find an estimated 10 million Africans).[44] This number will probably keep on growing because of the second generation that is being born here and the continuing economic and humanitarian hardships on the African continent.

Number of Africans in the Netherlands broken down in countries of origin.

Somalia	27.567	**Liberia**	**2.819**
Cape Verde	19.353	Kenya	2.207
Ghana	17.974	Cameroon	1.827
South Africa	14.914	Burundi	1.581
Angola	11.710	Congo-Brazzaville	1.568
Ethiopia	10.120	Togo	1.450
Congo	8.312	Tanzania	1.389
Sudan	7.629	Zimbabwe	1.356
Nigeria	6.712	Rwanda	1.311
Sierra Leone	**6.031**	Senegal	1.131
Guinea	3.371		

Source: Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS, The Netherlands), January 2003.

The civil wars in the Mano River Union have also given rise to enormous flows of displaced civilians and refugees flying the two countries. Some of them have managed to reach the Netherlands and have been given a temporary status by the Dutch government. Some of them are still in the asylumprodecure waiting for a decision.

The Sierra Leonean and Liberian community in the Netherlands

The Sierra Leonean community in The Netherlands has a size of approximately 6000 people, while the Liberians are half as big, 3000 people. This is the biggest group in Europe, but of course the biggest Liberian Diaspora community can be found in the US. A bigger Sierra Leonean Diaspora community can be found in Britain.

It is difficult to locate the two groups in a certain locality; both groups are scattered over the country, due to the different locations of the asylum camps (AZC) and the allocation of housing by asylum institutions. The Sierra Leoneans have their biggest communities in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Eindhoven where they also have the oldest organisations. It is not clear whether most live in the same neighbourhoods, but even if, we can't really talk of a community as they don't have their own shops, cafes or churches. They do have meeting places, eg. churches or café's, but those are not exclusively for Sierra Leoneans. The meetings of the Diaspora organisations form one way of regular contact. Once a month they meet in community centres or in the house of one of the members. The strongest binding

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[44] A. Tola (Afroneth), *Peacebuilding and governance programme in 5 African countries*, December 2003.

factor though are parties and music. Almost every weekend small groups meet each other when going out, keeping each other informed by telephone. Internet hardly serves as a communication means as only a limited number has access to computers and/or internet. Every now and then bigger Sierra Leonean parties are organised that attract a lot of people from all over the country. The Sierra Leonean community also has a radio-program that is broadcasted once a month in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

When applying the typology of degrees of ethnic incorporation constructed by Handelman (1977) we can say that the Sierra Leoneans in the Netherlands are not really forming a community, which would require a territorial base with more or less permanent physical boundaries, but that we should rather talk of an ethnic association.[45] This includes the use of standardised ethnic ascriptions, interaction along ethnic lines and the existence of organisations to express shared interests and goals. We will see later on that both Sierra Leoneans and Liberians have set up an umbrella organisation to voice their interests in the Netherlands.

The situation of the Liberians in the Netherlands is comparable with what has just been described for the Sierra Leoneans. They are scattered across the country and are mainly organised by town. Also for them parties, festivals and especially sports are social occasions where they can easily gather. They have one café in Amsterdam called Tee-Weah (referring to the famous Liberian footballer Georg Weah). They do have a 'community' website, but it is not very actively used. Tor practical purposes I will continue to use the word 'community' to refer to the Sierra Leoneans and Liberians living in the Netherlands.

Organisation and activities

The Diaspora organisations of Sierra Leone and Liberia in the Netherlands are relatively new. Some were established during the early years of the war (begin 90s), but most have emerged during the last 5 years. Most of them have two functions; first the one of helping their fellow nationals with problems here in the Netherlands and bringing people from their country together here in the Netherlands and secondly helping back home. This second function has come up especially after the wars ended and in Sierra Leone after the elections in 2002. This is an interesting development, as also identified by Black, Koser and Al-Ali, whereby the distinction between labour and victim Diasporas is being blurred. Usually it is expected that 'victim'-Diasporas tend not to maintain links with their countries of origin due to the involuntary nature of their exile. But as we also see in Bosnian and Eritrean Diaspora communities the 're-engagement of the exile communities with their countries of origin suggests a transition from victim Diasporas who flee involuntarily to labour Diasporas who remain voluntarily.'[46]

All the organisations run on voluntary basis and only receive finance from member fees and parties/events or incidental support from local municipalities. The members meet mostly once a month, at a members home or for the bigger organisations in a community centre.

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[45] Handelman in: *Ethnicity and nationalism*, quoted by T.H. Eriksen, 1993, pp. 41–45.
[46] R. Black e.a., *The mobilisation and participation of transnational exile communities in post-conflict reconstruction*, 1998–2000.

The attendance of those meetings varies strongly and can be so little that meetings have to be cancelled. The executives of bigger organisations meet more often.

In the way the Diaspora organisations try to help the home country we can distinguish two patterns. Some organisations chose for short-term support for basic needs (example: Liberian Association Holland, see profile later on). This kind of support can be seen as a kind of extension of personal remittances: Diaspora groups help communities back home with the basic needs like sanitation, clothes, school materials. Mostly the Diaspora groups collect things in their hostcountry and send this to the home country, either to their own communities there (via organisations like the YMCA) or via the government. Also the individual remittances are considered as peacebuilding activity.

Long term structural help is another way of helping the home country (example: Silnef, see profile later on). Mostly smaller groups want to focus on more longterm projects and structural help. For them education is the most important issue right now. Education is seen as the foundation for peace as it allows people to make their own choices and to live independently. Without education people are easily convinced and manipulated, which happened during the war. Their ideas range from setting up schools, computer training centres, to organising conferences and workshops in schools and organising exchange programs and internships for youth in the West to get experience with good governance. For students studying in the West internships back home can function as a 'try-out', to see what their possibilities there could be. An African law student in the Netherlands for example said that he wants to do an internship at the Special court in Sierra Leone.

The African Diaspora could also contribute via NGO's and the ministry of development cooperation in the Netherlands, but that option has hardly been mentioned during the interviews. One respondent mentioned that is was a mistake of the West not to involve the Africans living in the Diaspora in their programmes, because the Africans in the Diaspora 'are neutral and have knowledge about their homecountries.' Another proposal was to involve Africans living in the Netherlands more when working with ama's (unaccompanied minors) and African youth in the Netherlands.

Liberia

The Liberian community has an umbrella organisation since 1999, The Liberian Association Holland, which coordinates activities at a national level. There are several smaller organisations under this umbrella like 'Life', for Liberians in Enschede. They have recently collected some cloths, matrasses etc. and sent that to Liberia through the YMCA. Bengoma (for the Mandingo tribe) and Gibamo focus on organising cultural activities here in the Netherlands and maintaining ethnic traditions. Netlib, an international Liberian organisation, focuses on educational matters in Liberia. I will take the Liberian Association Holland as a case-study to describe more in detail the functioning of the umbrella organisation.

Liberian Association Holland (LAH). LAH was founded in 1991 as an umbrella organisation for all Liberians living in Holland and has had two chairman elections since that time: in

1999 and one in 2003. The present president used to be mr. Abraham Tiaquicyl, but he has recently gone back to Liberia, leaving the organisation without clear leadership. LAH has an office at VON (Vluchtelingen Organisaties Nederland) in Utrecht. LAH has several committees on different issues (member, social, sports, refugee committees). The organisation is committed to helping Liberians in the Netherlands and in Liberia. LAH is also committed to promoting national reconciliation, reconstruction, peace, unity and rehabilitation. The legal assistance provided by LAH for Liberians in the Netherlands is given through working with legal practitioners, Refugee Organisations, government authorities and support groups on Liberian asylum application procedures. They also organise social events, and coordinate Liberians at events like Kwakoe festival.

In 2001 they have set up a project called LibcomNed (Liberian Community Nederland) with the aim of bringing Liberians and friends of Liberians together in cyberspace. This has resulted in a website, www.libcomnet.net, to inform Liberians about what is going on here and at home. The idea is that everybody can contribute and discuss issues on the website, people are encouraged to say whatever is on their mind. The interactive chatroom doesn't seem very active presently, but the website has been very instrumental for a web-conference with interim president Bryant in February 2004. The US institute of peace hosted this virtual town hall meeting with Gyude Bryant. Via the Libcomnet-website Liberians in Europe could attend this meeting and ask Bryant questions. Bryant expressed his willingness to organise a face-to-face meeting with Liberians living in Europe. Question is whether this will happen before the elections in October this year. The Diaspora is very eager to get a bigger say in the developments in their country but it will greatly depend on the attitude of the new president whether they will be accepted in that role. In the US the Union of Liberian Associations America (ULAA) is presently organising an all Liberian national conference including several town hall meetings and a concluding conference in Monrovia with chairman Bryant. Already critics state that it will only be the older generation that will be invited to these meetings while the new generation does not get invited to give their viewpoints.

Despite the newness of the Liberian community in the Netherlands, LAH has been quite active in organising activities to support the development of Liberia. We can identify different strategies, even though they are still in a developing stage. Apart from fundraising evenings for Liberian refugees in camps in the Mano River Union, they also attempt to organise the Diaspora community in a more structural way in order to contribute to peace. During a peacebuilding conference in Doorn for all Liberians in Europe (July 2003) they discussed how they could contribute to peacebuilding back home. They came up with a communique in which they stated that the role of Liberians in the Diaspora in building peace and security should principally be: 'To serve as a lobby and advocacy group for Liberia to the Netherlands, the individual European Governments, the EU, Liberian International Contact Group and the International community in bringing total peace and stability to our war-torn country.' With such communiqués and press releases they tried to lobby at the political level for more attention for the war in Liberia.

It seems though that such initiatives have been exceptions rather then rule and that there are difficulties in developing and sustaining initiatives. The attendants of the Doorn con-

ference were very positive and happy that initiatives were being taken to unify the Liberian Diaspora in Europe, but are disappointed about the follow up. They have never heard anything since about the plans and intended actions. The follow up conference was supposed to take place in Sweden in May 2004, but due to a lack of funds it was restricted to the Liberian community in Sweden. Also the activities of LAH have recently been going down since the chairman left to return to Liberia. Only one executive member is left to pull the projects. The community is disappointed in the bad leadership and doesn't want to support this 'one-man-show'. It is difficult to find suitable new leaders; many are not motivated enough after the previous failures to work voluntary for the organisation and the ones who are willing are often not in the position because of uncertain legal status or a lack of skills and experience. Also it is hard for LAH to find funds for their projects. They say to have tried to present projects to the mainstream development organisations in the Netherlands but that there was no interest for their projects. These internal and external difficulties make that many initiatives die down and subsequently decrease the commitment of the rest of the community. A planned sensitisation project for the elections in Liberia (October 2005) for which the Dutch government would provide training has apparently also died down.

Sierra Leone

The Sierra Leone community has organised itself in small groups in almost every big town in Holland: Slada (Sierra Leone Association of Development Amsterdam) in Amsterdam, the SLHO (Sierra Leone Humanitarian Organisation) in Rotterdam, the SLPU (Sierra Leone Progressive Union) in Tilburg, Silnef (Sierra Leone Educational Foundation) in Best and also in Nijmegen, Dordrecht, Den Haag and Utrecht we can find groups of Sierra Leoneans. The SLHO is the biggest organisation and exists for some years already together with Slada, the Amsterdam organisation. The SLHO was set up to support people in Sierra Leone in 1999 by Obang Stalin. They recently had elections for a new chairman, which is Foday Kamara. They say they have gotten some funds from Cordaid (Cordaid couldn't confirm this; it was probably a very small project) and sometimes they get support from the municipality of Rotterdam, but mostly they finance activities from the member fees and raising money at parties. Every year they have a big party to celebrate the founding of the organisation and to raise money. They have sent 4 ambulances and some old hospital materials from the San Fransisco hospital in Rotterdam to Freetown through the government. Recently the chairman has gone back and saw that some of the ambulances are not being used properly by the hospitals in Freetown, some are being used as taxi's. He commented that next time they won't work with the government any more.

The rest of the small groups are mostly not older then one or two years. Presently all organisations are working on forming a central union as umbrella organisation. The first aim of the organisations is to bring Sierra Leoneans together here in the Netherlands and to support each other. But after the elections in Sierra Leone (2002) it has become a trend to also aim for helping back home. Most organisations are too small and too new to have succeeded in that already. Only Slada and the SLHO have sent some collected goods home.

Flyer SLHO party

As an example of a smaller Diaspora organisation I will give a description of the Sierra Leone Education Foundation (Silnef).

Silnef (Sierra Leone Education Foundation). Silnef was founded in December 2002 by a group of Sierra Leoneans who wanted to help foster education in their native country. They started with quite a big group, but now they are just with three, due to differences in ideas. The objectives of the organisation are to make education possible for every school going child in Sierra Leone, to engage those students in participatory learning, to upgrade the educational standard of the schools in Sierra Leone and to offer financial support to intelligent and promising students in Sierra Leone. Also they want to support Sierra Leoneans living in Holland in order to cope with the integration process.

They have stated different strategies to reach these objectives which are the following: to work very closely with schools, cop-rate organizations, religious organizations and individuals to support their programmes, to identify potential donors and to establish and maintain educational institutions in Sierra Leone. Recently the chairman has made an assessment visit to Bo, the hometown of two of the three executives, and talked there to community leaders and school leaders. They have given them several options of how they could help, for example through supporting the library so that all students can make use of the books. They are planning to set up a computerschool themselves in Bo to train local students there. They will employ someone to run the school in the first year, as they are not capable of going there themselves due to their jobs here in the Netherlands even though they are willing to do that in future. They will supervise the process from here though and through workvisits.

The chairman indicated that it is very important to guide the process from here, as they have more experience with democratic processes and accountability through their stay in the Netherlands. They have chosen to only work with a small group of people that are really committed to setting up this project. This because, according to the present chairman, only a few people are really prepared to take risks and put their own money in projects. Investing their own money is necessary as most donors are only willing to give money once they have seen some results. Indeed such smaller organisations often drive on one or a few very motivated and relatively well-positioned people who also have the possibility to actually visit their country to see what is needed.

Asylum procedure: Legal uncertainty

The problems with the asylum procedure are some of the major obstacles to active participation in Diaspora organisations and helping back home. Without a legal status people's mobility is reduced, they can't work, education is hampered and they have little financial resources. For people who are still in the asylum procedure even paying the transport costs to go to meetings is too much. Besides those practical set-backs, the uncertainty and stress caused by the timely procedures should not be underestimated. It preoccupies the mind of those involved and leaves little space for other ideas or activities. Also in the study of Koser and Khalid on Bosnian and Eritrean refugees it appears that legal status is the most important factor influencing the capacity of refugees to engage in activities for the home country.[47]
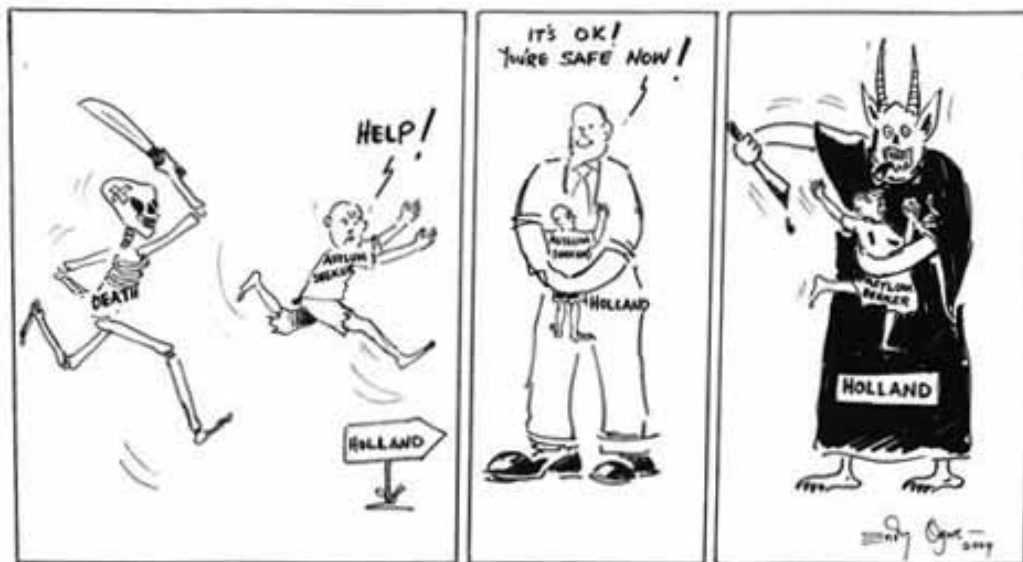
This cartoon shows how many asylum seekers experience their reception in the Netherlands …
Source: African Bulletin (Media Blackberry), June 2004

[47] R. Black e.a., *Refugees and transnationalism*, 2001.

Insecurity with respect to their legal status not only hinders integration and prevents people from actively seeking employment, but also leads to psychological problems, which can cause apathy and non-commitment.[48] The legal status is the first thing people want to see addressed by their self organisations, but to really articulate their problems and grievances to the Dutch government they need to be well organised. Ironically it is foremost the asylum procedure that hampers the organisation of the communities and frustrates many young people.

Education and employment

During the asylum procedure people are not allowed to follow education; they usually only get Dutch lessons. There are only a few stronger personalities who manage to concentrate on education during these uncertain times and force themselves through the system. After the procedure a lot have lost the motivation to go back to school and try to find a job straight away, also to be able to send some money home and live up to the expectations back of those left behind. How many youth profit from education here is difficult to say. Only a few can be found in the universities. Probably most of them can be found in hbo's or vocational training institutions (roc). However, some youth suggest that a lot of them don't want to do the effort and don't take the chance of learning something. Instead they chose the quick way of finding a job and making money. The ones that have completed education or are still studying stress that it is all about effort and hard work and that many are not prepared to put in that effort.

Khoser and Khalid (2001) identify employment as another key factor indicating the capacity of refugees to give support to the home country. Their study confirms that there is a close correlation between legal status, employment and level of wages. As most of the Sierra Leoneans and Liberians have an insecure legal status, especially now that the wars are officially over, their economic position is in general not favourable. Unfortunately I have not been able to make a good inventory of the career profiles of the youth but key figures said most youth are isolated and don't find themselves in the mainstream job circuit. The economical climate is not favourable in the Netherlands at this moment and this is reflected back in the first case on these youth. Few have a stable income, which makes it difficult for them to really invest in projects back home.

Funding

Most organisations get their resources from membership fees and sometimes they receive some small municipal support. They organise parties to collect some money, but their financial base is small. It is difficult to get funding in the beginning, as funding agencies want to see some outcomes before they invest. Some organisations have tried to get support from Dutch development organisations but their projects were not accepted, which caused more disappointment among the members. Cordaid, one of the Dutch development organisations,

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[48] R. Black e.a., *Refugees and transnationalism*, 2001.

says that they do support migrant initiatives through their 'front office' (Service Bureau Particulieren), and that they support the umbrella organization AfrikaNetwerk. They have supported projects from the Somalian community, which is one of the biggest African communities in the Netherlands that are very active in their home country, which might indicate that it is difficult for smaller and less organized communities to meet the demands of donor organisations. Apart from the high demands of the donor organisations of the project proposals, even finding the way to the right organisation is a problem for many migrant organisations. They know the different organisations have different themes and priorities, which change with time, but they often don't know where to find the exact information. Recently the donor organisations in the Netherlands have created a website to make their frontdesks more accessible for citizens who want to initiate small, private projects (www.linkis.nl). This website is only in Dutch though and therefore not useful for 'new' migrants. Some African umbrella organisations like Afroneth have noticed this problem and are taking up the position of mediator between the smaller groups and the donor organisations.

Besides the problems with donor organisations, they also complain about the attitude of the Dutch government. They are not at all supported in their initiatives and have to struggle with the structures of the Dutch society. They feel they need more recognition from the Dutch government.

For now though the few organisations that try to start up projects back home survive on the input of the personal members (working mostly) and hope that in future they will get structural support. Because all the work is done voluntarily in the starting phase, this often creates problems of conflicting interests. People that do have a job might have more money to invest, but they have little time. People that don't have a job have little finance and also often lack the skills for effective organisational management. The difficulties of sustaining their own lives in the Dutch society is a problem for all; they all have to struggle in some way to make their own living. They mention that for the Liberian community groups in the US it is easier to get funding for their projects as the political interest of the US in Liberia is bigger, due to the historical links with the country. Liberian organisations easily get support from the state they live in. The communities here would like to make use of the EU for funding, but first have to become better organised to be able to get to that level.

ICT's and digital divide

New communication technologies are expected to lessen the distance between migrants and their home country and to make it easier for them to stay connected with the people at home as well as the other people in the Diaspora. Some bigger migrant communities certainly make use of the new opportunities of ICT's; like the case of the Burundian Diaspora where a webforum functioned as a unifying factor or an example of the Eritrean community in the UK, given by Koser and Khalid, where 'the burgeoning presence of Eritrea on the Internet provides an interesting channel for members of the Diaspora to contribute towards

reconstruction in their home country'.[49] However, in the case of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean community in the Netherlands it seems that they don't manage to profit from these advantages and are rather still on the wrong side of the digital divide. Communication with the home country via internet is hampered by the little technological infrastructure there. Most say that internet is very much needed to connect their home country to the rest of the world and setting up computer training centres is seen as a priority by many Diaspora groups as it is a means for education and sensitisation. For now though internet is still restricted to the capital and some major big towns which restricts its function as communicationbridge to the Diaspora. Cell phones however are abundant and are one of the first items people purchase in the homecountries or which is sent to them from the Diaspora.

In the Netherlands internet is used by some to communicate with fellow nationals, but most information on meetings and events goes through telephone or letters. Internet is also used to stay informed about the situation in the home country, but also in this case most information is gathered from family through the phone, from television or via personal networks. The Diaspora youth have little political awareness and although they say to know what the country needs, it seems that their information about the situation on the ground is limited. Hardly anybody has been back recently.

Access to computers or internet is not always evident, which could be one reason why the interactive websites are not actively used. Some blame it on the moderators, but key figures indicate it is rather a disinterest. In other bigger refugee communities internet plays an important role in motivating people for support to the home country. This could be related to the fact that those communities have more members with a better financial and social status.

Divided communities

Although it is not a unanimous fact it does seem that there are a lot of differences within the communities. Some say this is a result from the war and that those wounds are difficult to eradicate. Many are still dealing with the traumatic experiences of the war and are focused on themselves, which gives them little space to engage with the community. Meetings with a lot of members often end up in chaos due to a lack of respect for different opinion, which has led some people to conclude that it is better to work with a small group of committed people (Life, Netlib). Problems of trust and jealousies make it difficult for the communities to speak with one voice and the groups have problems with getting well organised. They often lack management and communication skills, which makes their work less effective. Members often don't respect time and come late or not at all to meetings and it is difficult communities to find committed leaders that are in the position to lead the community. This is a serious setback as, according to Koser and Khalid (2001), the level of identification with a community organisation plays a significant role in the desire to become involved in activities

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[49] R. Black e.a., *Refugees and transnationalism*, 2001.

and events for the home country organised at a community level. This indicates that only the restricted group that is member of the Sierra Leonean and Liberian organizations will have potential for collective action. However, they realise that before collective support is possible, they have to be organised in order to be able to gain support from the government and NGOs for their projects.

The Liberians give at first sight the impression of a harmonious community, well coordinated with a central union and a good sharing of information. They say that good organisation of the Liberian community is a prerequisite for achieving things, here and back home. Due to good leadership from the beginning of their presence in the Netherlands, they are now united and respect differences. Tribal organisations are accepted as long as they are open to communicate with the national association. But this is not the whole picture. The Liberian Association Holland has recently gone through serious leadership problems, in which members were complaining that the leaders did not communicate with them. Especially after the successful conference held in Doorn, people were very disappointed that no follow up or communication took place. Recently the leadership of the organisation has completely died down and leadership is now seen as the essential thing missing in the community to unite them. The smaller organisations also have their organisational problems. As one respondent puts it: 'We Liberians just cant stay together long.'

Interestingly enough it appears that also in the much bigger and older Liberian Diaspora community in the US division is existent. It is a sentiment echoed by immigration experts, area lawmakers and Liberians themselves: 'As a community, Liberians are one of the least organized, least cohesive immigrant groups in the United States. It's made them a community in crisis,' experts say, leaving them without a safety net as they try to make a life in a foreign country.[50] According to J. Herzig, an expert in asylum law in the US and an attorney with experience handling Liberian cases, 'Liberians are almost unique in the fact that just as the society is splintered in Liberia, it is totally splintered in the States.'[51] Herzig believes the lack of community stems directly from the war. Liberia is a nation of different ethnicities and, as a result, people's identities and loyalties are derived from their ethnic group. The country has 16 ethnic groups and many of them turned on each other in the 14 years of war. As a result, there is no trust, he says.

However, on the other hand the Liberian community in the US does seem to be very active in organising events and is also capable of uniting its members. In 2003, as civil war in Liberia peaked, Liberian immigrants throughout America participated in a phone drive to urge the United States to intervene. Overall the Liberian community in the US is well organized with many Liberian associations, women organizations, websites, forums and an umbrella organization ULAA (Union of Liberian Associations America). They have many intellectuals and people with good jobs that enhance the opportunities to contribute to the

[50] Courier post online, *Liberia: Between two worlds: Liberians lack unity, safety net*, 21 November 2004, www.courierpostonline/liberia.
[51] Courier post online, *Liberia: Between two worlds: Liberians lack unity, safety net*, 21 November 2004, www.courierpostonline/liberia.

George Weah, accompanied by volunteers and soldiers, promotes HIV/aids awareness at a football stadium in Monrovia. Liberia, 1997. Source: © UNICEF/HQ97-0339/STEM

George Weah

George Weah, a Liberian soccer player and chosen as best African footballer of the 20th century, uses his success and fame for the development of his home country Liberia. Apart from sponsoring the Liberian national team, he is also ambassador for Unicef, supports programs for ex-combatants and has initiated the Junior Professionals, a young talent team that gets soccer-training as well as mainstream education. He is an idol for many young Liberians and is the 'sports promise of a country longing for unity.'[52] Recently he has stated that he will be running for president in the coming elections in October 2005. His changes are estimated quite high due to his popularity among big parts of the population.

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development of Liberia, which is also shown by websites reporting on projects in Liberia. A lot of candidatese for the upcoming presidential elections come from the US. However, many believe that the only thing that can unite the Liberians is their love for soccer. George Weah, a famous football star (see box), has decided to run for president in the coming elections and his chances are estimated quite high. His popularity cuts across ethnic groups, gender, class, and even warring factions in Liberia, thanks to the many humanitarian projects he has set up in the country.[53] Also in the Netherlands all respondents agreed that sport has a high peacebuilding potential. At national festivities and festivals like Kwakoe you see a lot of Liberians coming together.

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[52] Ode (Dutch monthly magazine), *Portret George Weah*, n. 69, September 2004.
[53] The Christian Science Monitor (world, Africa), *Can a former footballer unite Liberia?*, November 19, 2004, http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/1119/p06s01-woaf.html.

In the Sierra Leonean community in the Netherlands it zooms around that it is time to come together and speak in one voice: 'The Sierra Leonean community is now conscious that we need to come together' (see poem on the next page). The central union has been formed, but it is all a very fresh process and not without difficulties. In the meetings leading up to the formation of the central union you could see some kind of 'regional' differences between 'Brabant' and 'Rotterdam'. Questions of ownership, position, the relationship between the bigger and the smaller organisations and of who took the initiative troubled the central aim of forming a central union. The Liberians served as a kind of example: if they can do it, why not us. Although the union is now formed, there are a lot of doubts to be heard from different angles. Problems with sharing of responsibility, no respect for differences, not saying the truth but only what wants to be heard, are some remarks made by discouraged people. But also in the United Kingdom it took Afford, an African Diaspora organisation, 10 years to reach a certain level of recognition and organisation in the Diaspora communities.

When looking at the Sierra Leonean community in the UK we can see some differences with the one in the Netherlands. The UK community is much older, bigger and has a lot more intellectuals and highly educated members. This makes it easier for newcomers to absorb in the community, while in the Netherlands Sierra Leonean people have to struggle so much themselves that they don't easily share their achievements with newcomers. In fact a key figure indicated that the whole community in the Netherlands is more apart then an outsider could see. The different loyalties related to the conflict keep people apart, also here. It takes time to change the differences that have been put in people's minds for years. Some are disappointed in their fellow nationals, others accuse each other of opposing loyalties. In fact there are many dormant and inactive members that only come to parties. Others complain that Sierra Leoneans don't want to commit themselves to longtime projects; that they don't believe in longterm investments and don't want to invest their own money in projects back home.

So there are different opinions on the perceived unity of the communities here in the Netherlands. Some say reconciliation is easier in the Diaspora because they can see things in a broader scope. Here people realise that they are all victims of the war and that the fact that they are Liberian or Sierra Leonean comes first. These people believe they are more together in the Netherlands than back home. Others stress the difficulties of eradicating the differences between people that are still a result of the war. Indeed political conflicts which divide the community and render any united activities impossible is, according to Wahlbeck, a common theme in studies of refugee communities.[54]

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[54] O. Wahlbeck, *The concept of Diaspora as an analytical tool in the study of refugee communities*, 2002.

Sierra Leoneans!
Unite Now or Never!

by Teddy Foday-Musa

Let us reframe from throwing
spanner into the wheels of our peace
and unity and let us equally reframe
from putting a knife on the things that
will bring us together as one

United we can stand, and the sky
shall be our limit, divided we can fall
to the bottom-bed of the sea
together we can move mountains
with a mere wave of our hands

Are we still not ashamed of ourselves,
that today, a Sierra Leonean
has been documented for killing
another Sierra Leonean!

That a Sierra Leonean has been
documented for chopping the hands
and miming the limbs of another
Sierra Leonean!

That a Sierra Leonean has been
documented for raping a
Sierra Leonean girl under 18,
killing her!

Are we not ashamed of ourselves
that, when the Mother Teresas and
the Nelson Mandelas are being
applauded for their generosities,
we Sierra Leoneans move around
with a brand of inhumanity

Can't we now realise ourselves?
having gone through 10 years of
senseless war, which claimed the lives
of 30,000 Sierra Leoneans

Can't we now realise ourselves in the
21st century!

When everybody is going forward,
we have chosen to stay backward

Can't we now realise ourselves?

When the world today has become
a global village, yet we have
chosen to live in the forest
Can't we now realise ourselves!

When the youths today, all over
the world are receiving the best of
treatments we have chosen to
murder the parents of our own

youths and forcefully conscript 5,000
of them in a senseless war

Why! Why pay so dearly for
all these things!

When we cannot pay a single dime
for peace and unity

And why not now?
Brothers and sisters, we need to unite
now or never

Let us stop the unhealthy
competition stop it maaaaaan!!!

Yes! We need competition,
but not those with the substance
of a witch hunt

Don't crucify your brother before
judgment

And for those Sierra Leoneans
who think that they can still play
around with the ugly side of the
Sierra Leonean image, be warned
and know that history will one day
judge you,

And that the anointed prayer
of our colonial British Governor
Clerkson, will not live you untouched

For today, the evil that men do, lives
to be seen with them, and on them

Think and re ect! Then you can make
a nice guess and save yourself from
such embarrassment

For those Sierra Leoneans,
who think that they can still make a
difference, be blessed! And keep it up
for you shall always conquer them

Yes, I mean that we shall overcome!
We shall overcome one dayyyyy!
because I know that blessed are
the peace makers

*Mr. Teddy Foday-Musa is a native of
Sierra Leone and he lives in Rotterdam.
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Poem from one of my respondents, African Bulletin (Media Blackberry), July 2004

Help yourself before you help others

Although most of the Diaspora organisations have 'helping back home' as one of the aims in their constitution, the first goal of the organisations is to help and support each other here in the Netherlands. All organisations state that unity, bringing them together here in the Netherlands is the main aim of their organistion. They see themselves as a kind of 'substitute' family where people can find support, as many of them came here alone. In reality we have seen though that not all members of the community chose to identify with the self-organisations. Especially when they are in need of support more people turn to the Diaspora organisations. This is illustrated by a remark of one of the respondents saying that when circumstances in the Netherlands become worse for them (for example stricter asylum procedures), more people subscribe to a Diaspora organisation in order to get help and support. In that way hostility pushes group members to draw on each other, as Zack and Mohan (2002) state.

Although all respondents interact with other African nationalities and in a lesser degree with Dutch people, their own country-mates are clearly the central orientation point. Their national identity, being a Liberian or a Sierra Leonean is by far the most present identity. They say there is no place but home. In fact a lot of them live in a Liberian or Sierra Leonean community within the Dutch community, which does not mean that the whole community forms an harmonious group, but that they chose their social contacts primarily from their own country. Parties are mostly with their fellow nationals, sometimes with other (West)Africans. In general they perceive the Dutch people as friendly, but to really become friends is a different story. Some that try, feel they cant reach the Dutch people, they don't have space for them. This pushes people to be with their own people. Some that have a legal status in the Netherlands say they are legally Dutch, but Sierra Leonean/Liberian by heart. The fact that identity is not fixed is well expressed by the following remark: 'At times I try not to sierraleonise myself in certain gatherings and in certain gatherings I love to sierraleonize myself.'

The Diaspora organisations seem to have a strong social character, bringing together Liberians and Sierra Leoneans in a foreign country. The role Diaspora organisations play in integrating newcomers into the Diasporic community is said to be even stronger in the bigger and well-established Diaspora communities in UK and Us where the communities are more solid and have a better financial base. Often networks and shared consciousness between Diaspora members are only found in well-established Diaspora communities.[55]

The unity that they are trying to establish in the Diaspora is brought into relation with the problems in their homecountries. They see the lack of unity as one of the major causes of the war and they believe that if they can speak 'with one voice' here, that can be an example for the people back home.

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[55] (Mohan and Zack-Williams, *Globalisation from below*, 2002, p. 221)

The unity here is by some seen as a condition for being able to contribute to the development back home: 'How can you think of making peace when you are not united here?' They first have to rebuild themselves and get organised here, before they can contribute back home. Integration is seen of one of the conditions for learning things and becoming organised. One of the respondents remarks that 90% of the Sierra Leoneans is not really integrated and is not doing efforts to become integrated. He is disappointed about that and says: 'if we decide to do everything within our own community what do you think we can learn from the West, nothing. ... But if you interact and mingle you are within, then you can transform yourself first of all and later your countrymen.' Interestingly enough research shows that it can also work the other way round. According to Wahlbeck (2002) a diasporic orientation towards the country of origin can also be a resource facilitating integration in the new country of settlement. This is especially the case for smaller groups of the community that come together on a common political affiliation or background and through that manage to collectively solve problems faced in the hostcountry.

Conditioned return

The few most active members of organisations express that they feel responsibility towards their home country. They want to make use of the privileges of education and experience that they have had here for their own people back home. One of their motivations is that they can't change the Dutch society anymore, they can contribute but there is no peace to build here. Back home though they can still change a lot. They can transform the people there. There are also some respondents who openly reject the option of return. People that don't have anybody left there, people who fought in rebelgroups, don't feel any obligation to go back. Others mention that they have integrated here and contributed to the society here, which legitimates for them to stay here.

The youth who say to be willing to go back always mention as condition for a return that they have to be able to take something home. They want to be equipped; skilled or trained in some way. Once they can offer something to their home country they are all saying to be willing to return. The big question is whether this is really happening or is going to happen in the future. According to Akyeampong the hardships in the hostcountry strengthen the nostalgia and the longing for home among migrants. But is this longing for home really translated into return or at least in a transfer to the home country of the things learnt in the West?

The answer seems to be 'no' as long as there are no (perceived) opportunities in the home country for the youth. Even though I did not manage to get reliable information about whether people are returning to their home country or not and while some Diaspora respondents say that many people/youth from the Diaspora are returning or are willing to return in the near future, it seems that most of them are postponing a return. First of all this is because of the two conditions of safety in the home country and a certain degree of 'success' in the hostcountry, which is also being indicated by Mohan and Zack-Williams (2002): '80 per cent of [the] respondents intended to return to Africa once they were wealthy enough

and the political and economic climate had stabilised.' Security at home is seen as a first prerequisite for a possible return. Next to that the well-being of the individual in the Diaspora is an important factor in predicting the possibility of a return and especially for youth it is not easy to attain a certain degree of well-being. But apart from those two conditions the perceived lack of opportunities in the home country plays in my opinion an important role in their decision not to go back. As also appears from the research on Bosnian and Eritrean refugees by Koser and Khalid the 'ongoing economic crisis, rampant unemployment, and dependence on international humanitarian assistance' are the most frequently mentioned factors that prevent refugees from returning to their country of origin.[56] Opportunities are very important for youth; as well for working on their 'careers' and future as for forming their identity. In our case where the youth left the home country in a state of war and where they don't see any opportunities for themselves, the youth are trapped between two 'push' forces and they figure that the Diaspora with all the hardships still gives them more chances then returning home.

Even though the journey of these youth as being regufees has started involuntary, their position is dynamic and changing with time. This continuously confronts them with new decision moments, which can also create new opportunities. Like Koser and Khalid say: 'for at least some refugees, moving is only the start for a range of possible options in terms of destination and status.'[57] They live in a different world here, have adapted quickly to a new way of life and opportunities, however small, and can't easily decide to go back to their original world. For voluntary migrant communities or refugee communities that have a secure legal status in the hostcountry it is easier to maintain links with the home country through temporary visits to the home country, like was being described for the Eritrean refugee community that has a lot of transnational links with Eritrea and the Senegalese migrants in Italy that through their trade have a lot of contact with Senegal and ideally spend half of the year in Italy and the other half in Senegal.[58] It is true that some of the older youth do see opportunities in going back and in fact stress the importance of self-input: if they go back they are the ones who can create job-opportunities for youth there. They can start a business or an organisation and employ local youth. However, in general it seems that the attraction of the West with its opportunities is stronger then idealistic aspirations. Return therefore remains of symbolic importance. I think Eceheruo (1999) puts it very well: 'The power of the idea lies in the principle of it; that a return is possible forever, whenever, if ever.'[59]

Youth active?

Majority of the Sierra Leonean and Liberian community are youth, from Sierra Leone some say 90%, but are they active? Here again it is difficult to assess the truth; conflicting opinions

[56] R. Black e.a., *Refugees and transnationalism*, 2001.
[57] R. Black e.a., *Refugees and transnationalism*, 2001.
[58] R. Bruno, *From ethnic group to transnational community*, 2001.
[59] Eceheruo in: *Globalisation from below*, quoted by G. Mohan and A.B. Zack-Williams, 2002.

abide. Some youth say that they are very active, they constitute almost the whole community and they are taking the lead. Especially on the Sierra Leonean side the youth are said to be more active, the older generation gives them advice, but it is the youth that take the lead, especially for forming the Central Union.

Others have their doubts. They still see that the adults are taking the lead in the organisations and the youth are not really involved. They admit that a lot chose for the easy way; they are catching up the nice life they missed in their home country and are more concerned with their education and parties here. This ambiguity regarding youth can also found back in the study of Koser and Khalid (2001). Many elderly Eritreans maintain a generalised view that youngsters are not engaged in developments in Eritrea, and have little interest in playing an active part in the future of the country. They see a lack of 'national consciousness' amongst youngsters, especially for some 'who seem to have come to the conclusion that they should focus their attention on life in the host country.' This seems to be true for the 'younger' Sierra Leonean and Liberian youth that have come here with their parents. On the other hand it also appeared that other Eritrean youngsters are amongst the most active. Most of the main Eritrean websites and magazines, for example, have been started and are maintained by students, mainly in the USA. Also in the Netherlands we see that new initiatives like forming the umbrella organizations are organized by the 'older' part of the young generation.

Women active?

I have not been able to talk to a lot of women; I hardly saw them at meetings. This might be a sign that women are less active. Some of them say that was not the case; women are in fact very active; here in the Netherlands they have adopted equality of sexes and now women can even go for chairmanship, a miracle. However, others say women are hampered by lack of education. I asked some women who were coming to cook and they said they were too busy with their children and family to really participate in the meetings. The younger girls are mostly present at the parties but not at the meetings. They are preoccupied with their education and with parties. 'They are catching up the nice life' they missed back home. According to Mohan and Zack-Williams (2002, p. 227) it still often tends to be elites and especially men dominating the decision-making in local community organisations.

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion I will come back to the question whether Sierra Leonean and Liberian youth in the Diaspora (the Netherlands) contribute to peacebuilding processes in their homecountries.

Diaspora youth are generally occupied with many other things: asylum procedure, education and employment, their future plans, their image, parties. A home country where hard-

ship and unemployment abide is not really attractive to them. The Diaspora organisations that exist in the Netherlands mostly attract the 'older' youth in their mid twenties and primarily seem to have a social function. It is a place to meet each other and to give support to each other in the Netherlands. Since the wars have officially come to an end they also have started thinking about helping the people back home. Some initiatives for collecting goods, funds or medical equipment have been successful, but these actions are incidents rather then structural support. Even though the attachment to their home country is very alive and they all express a motivation to help the development of their home country, this willingness has only incidentally been translated into action.

We can identify different groups among the youth that all have their own reasons for the limited actual contribution. Youth that have come here with their parents have relatively easily integrated into the Dutch society through school and focus on the range of possibilities and a future here. Their original country is a different world for them that has little to offer to them. They enjoy catching up with the good life here. Most of the 'older' youth that have come here alone during the war have an uncertain legal status and consequently more difficulties to integrate. This makes it difficult for them to really engage themselves in any activities. They are financially and 'emotionally' blocked, often living in the asylum camps. Youth that do have a (temporary) permit and are working here don't want to give up their job and have little time and also little resources to invest in the home country. They have to struggle to survive here. Youth that are studying here as well have little time and resources to contribute at this moment.

Nevertheless we can find quite some youth in the Diaspora organisations that are motivated to do something for their home country. But also those organisations have limited capacity, financially and organisational, to set up projects for their home country. Management skills, effective communication, sharing of responsibility and good leadership are not always present but very much needed to coordinate activities that could help the development of the home country. Nevertheless they try to help through material support from here and quite a few young people also say they would like to go back once the situation is safe. Besides the security they put forward another important condition, which is that they first want to acquire knowledge and/or experience here; they want to return with something. But even though education will be a necessary step towards making their stay here useful for their home country, it is no guarantee at all that they will really transfer their knowledge back home. It is known that very few immigrants from Africa return voluntary. Even return-programs with financial incentives from the government have never succeeded.

The paradoxes revisited

Now, considering that the youth have the opportunity to learn new things in the Dutch society and that they do express a willingness to use their knowledge back home, can we consider them as the 'bridge' that Cohen ascribed as role to the Diaspora communities? The

Diaspora youth find themselves between the two worlds of poverty in their home country and the prospeerity of the West, even more then their peers at home. Unless those peers they actually find themselves in the middle of the world of prosperity and unlimited opportunities.

However, even though the Diaspora youth live here, their opportunities are not at all 'unlimited'. Educational and employment possibilities are restricted by asylum procedures and requirements. Even if they would wish to help, their financial and knowledge base is very small, which reduces their potentially advantaged position. Besides that they are attracted by the world of prosperity where they suddenly find themselves in. Image becomes a preoccupation; more then their peers at home they take care of their looks and use music, parties and well-furnished homes to profile themselves. Contrasting this with the fragile security situation at home and poverty and unemployment, we can understand that they use their 'conditioned' motivation to justify their continuous stay in the Netherlands. The perceived lack of opportunities back home continues to function as a strong push-factor while at the same time they are getting used to their life in the West. As stated in the report of the youth parliament; youth are the most affected by globalisation but also the most adaptable to new contexts.

This adaptation does not mean though that they lose the attachment to their home country. But it seems true to me that it is foremost the symbolic importance of the home country that they keep hold of. They are proud to be African and music, cultural events and sports foster this pride and solidarity with fellow Africans. But in political and economic domains there is little to be proud of and there we see that they turn more to the Western world they live in, condemning the backwardness of their own country. They clearly want to differentiate themselves from the youth in their home country who according to them have limited knowledge of the world compared to them (this will be dealt with in depth in chapter 6).

But there are a lot of differences within the Diaspora communities, even though they know they have to unify and speak with one voice to be able to help back home. Many people who are not member of the Diaspora organisations have their reasons for that, ranging from personal disillusions and jealousies to ethnic identifications or loyalties relating to the conflict. These differences make it difficult for the communities to come up with structural support and this is one of the reasons I think that support up till now is mostly restricted to individual remittances. Also in the UK it took Afford, an African Diaspora organisation, 10 years to reach a certain level of recognition and organisation in the Diaspora communities. On the other hand even older and bigger Diaspora communities in the US still struggle with division and powerstruggles. But in a bigger community this will affect the overall contribution of the entire community less then in a small, starting community.

Despite the differences the central point of identification remains with their fellow nationals. Even though they have flexible identities, either 'sierraleonizing' themselves or not, they need their fellow nationals as a substitute for the African context in which their identity was mostly filled up by the society around them. Some have difficulties to harmonize the tradition of solidarity of their cultures with the individuality in the Dutch society, others mention independency and self-responsibility as positive new values that they have adopted

from here. Despite the hardening climate in the Netherlands and the fact that the legal procedures have become stricter in the past years, none of the respondents mentions to feel really excluded from the Dutch society. It is true that he difficulties they have to assure their livelihood in the Netherlands makes them focus more on their own community, but that is in the first place the community in the hostcountry. For the people who left for economic reasons the symbolic importance of 'making their fortune' abroad exceeds to my impression the focus on a return to their home country. And even for the ones who were forced to leave because of war, their stay here is not exclusively seen as refuge, but also as a way to profit from better education and more opportunities then at home. Hardships in the hostcountry will force them to focus more on surviving here, which means that they will have little time and resources for the home country. In general it seems that the distance between the home country and their lives here rather creates a certain disinterest then extremist positions regarding the conflict. Most people do have contact with their family back home, but there is little contact with or knowledge about organisations and initiatives in their home country or communities.

The increase of information and transportation technologies is expected to decrease the distance between Diaspora communities and their home country. However, in the cases of these two communities the full potential of these technologies are not being used yet. Where internet plays a central role in connecting the members of bigger Diaspora communities in the US and the UK, the newness and size of the communities in the Netherlands seem to make them less capable to get access to the advantages of these technologies. In the UK the Sierra Leoneans are said to be higher educated and having a better financial base. The same can be said for the US where the Diaspora communities have a much longer history and stronger networks. The fact that these two Diaspora communities in the Netherlands are small and new and that they are mainly constituted by refugees without a secure legal status, makes them less cohesive and strong as a community. Business networks and common places are little developed, there is little capacity to organise themselves and they don't profit from the potentially binding effect of communication technologies. So this seems to indicate that educational level, financial base of its members and age and size of the community are important factors influencing the ability to organise help back home, but these are just preliminary conclusions, which need more research.

Even more difficult is it to locate the youth in these dynamics. They form the majority of the communities in the Netherlands, but they can also be regarded as a separate group. In general the conditions mentioned for the Diaspora communities weigh even stronger for the youth, as they are in general less stable in all spheres of life; careerwise but also their identity is more dynamic. This could make them suitable for the bridge-function, but this is not happening because of the many structural constraints combined with changing identities that adapt to the new environment they live in, making the gap to their original countries bigger. Concluding I would say that the bridge function of the Diaspora is applicable to a specific part of the Diaspora communities. Only people that are quite well-positioned, that have

the legal security and a financial basis (as was the case with the Eritrean refugees), people that are well integrated; only they have the space and the position to set up projects back home and establish transnational links with their home country. So, rather then speaking of transnational communities, I would in the case of Sierra Leone and Liberia at most acknowledge the existence of features of 'transnationalism' among certain groups in the community.

Chapter 6. Relation Diaspora – home country

Perceptions of relation and reflections on cooperation

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will take a look at the relationship between African youth in the Diaspora (Netherlands) and their peers at the African continent. The central theme will be the option of cooperation between the two groups. We will take a look at the opinions and ideas about cooperation from youth in the Diaspora as well as youth in the home country. How do they think about each other, how much contact do they have? It would seem that African youth organisations on the continent could get valuable support from youth in Diaspora organisations, but little is known about whether that is happening and how it could be most effective. The following observations derive from the interviews I had with 10 Liberian and 9 Sierra Leonean youth living in the Netherlands and from which most were member of a Diaspora organisation. The data from the home country come from the 10 Liberian and Sierra Leonean youth that I interviewed at the conference in Freetown and the 18 questionnaires that were returned by the participants of this same conference.

PARTNERSHIPS

From a report commissioned by Afford on the contributions of African organisations in the UK to Africa's development, it appeared that successful projects emphasised local involvement of counterparts on the ground in Africa.[1] Local and Diaspora groups' knowledge and capabilities proved to be more effective when they worked closely together and learnt from each other. Diaspora groups saw participation by rural communities in program design and operation as the most central feature of successful community development. The report also mentions difficulties related to cooperation with local organisations. The lack of reliable structures to work with back home is a big obstacle. Often members of Diaspora organisations cannot go home regularly to supervise projects and feedback from Africa may not always be accurate. Problems with money transfers, agreements not being met and poor communication were mentioned as challenges in the working relationship.

[1] C. Ndofor-Tah (Afford), *Diaspora and development – Contributions by African organisations in the UK to Africa's development*, September 2000.

During my fieldwork in the Netherlands I have not come across any Diaspora organisation that has a real, stable working relationship with (youth) organisations in the home country. At most they have incidental contact with a local ngo like YMCA to arrange for sending material support or have personal contacts in hometowns. Also on the part of the home country none of the youthgroups I spoke to had a partner in the Diaspora. A first explanation for this might be the fact that most of the Diaspora organisations in the Netherlands are just coming up and are still working on their own organisation before thinking about networking and cooperation with organisations in their home country. But this is probably not the only reason. From the interviews I had with the youth in the Diaspora and the youth in the homecountries on the *option* of cooperation it appeared that there are more obstacles to cooperation.

MISPERCEPTIONS AND MUTUAL DISTRUST

Interestingly enough both groups recognise the need for and the advantages of cooperation, but at the same time they have their reservations when talking about the 'other' group. The Diaspora youth have a very low estimation of the capacities of the youth at home that are seen as ignorant, lacking experience and being corrupt: 'The minds of the people there are still bad, they want to get it all, all the money, all the diamonds.' According to the Diaspora youth the poverty and the patriarchal relationships create a fertile ground for corruption and they don't trust that home country youth can resist that. They actually see corruption as a major obstacle for establishing improvements back home and for cooperation with youthgroups there. These negative perceptions of the youth at home lead them to see a need for 'supervision' of the projects from their side, at least during the initial stages of any cooperation. Diaspora youth are generally not aware of the many youth initiatives back home and the activities they are undertaking; they rather think the youth at home are 'dormant'.

It is interesting to see that the Diaspora youth think their peers back home don't have the capacity to really work on the development of their country while they themselves were part of that group before they came to Europe, maybe less than three years ago. They apparently classify themselves as part of a different and distinct group than the youth at home; we could see this as an example of in-group bias. As Tajfel has explained differentiation between one's own group and another group serves to create a meaningful definition of one's social identity in a certain situation.[2] In this case we can imagine that the Diaspora youth want to distinguish themselves positively from the youth that stayed at home and do this by stressing the advantages of 'seeing' more of the world and the 'ignorance' of the youth in the home country.

However, according to one of my key figures who regularly goes back to Sierra Leone, home country youth are far more active and conscious of the problems in their country then the youth in the Diaspora. The youth in the Netherlands are not informed, despite the

[2] H. Tajfel in *Social psychology across cultures*, quoted by P. Smith and M.H. Bond 1998, p. 175.

internet-opportunities, which according to him is due to a lack of interest. They are more concerned with their life in the Netherlands: their permit, learning Dutch and following courses. Maybe because the home country youth are hit harder there, they are more involved. They feel the actual hardships, know the problems better, were often part of the problem, and therefore have better ideas about solutions.

Indeed the home country youth in turn doubt about the contribution of Diaspora groups to projects in their home country because of the fact that the youth in the Diaspora are disconnected from the real situation on the ground. This makes it difficult for them to know what or how to contribute. Some say that because the people in the Diaspora are not part of the actual conflict they can't feel the way Africans that were really affected feel: 'It's hard to imagine or really understand a situation if you are not part of it.' Even if Diaspora groups decide to contribute, they often impose their own project ideas on the local communities or go through the government for their own status. The homeocuntry youth are of the opinion that *if* the Diaspora want to contribute they should consult local (youth)groups on what is really needed on the ground.

Home country youth in turn also seem to be guided by misperceptions about their peers in the Diaspora. They expect that the Diaspora youth have many channels to finances because they are now in the West. They give examples of famous people like Kofi Woods, a famous Liberian human rights activist that lived in the US, and footballer Georg Weah who did 'make it' abroad and who have returned and established training centres and schools for youth, which are immensely popular among the youth. This has raised their expectations about the financial contributions of people in the Diaspora. The Diaspora youth complain that they have a hard time explaining back home that life in the Diaspora is not as easy as it may seem.

Some of the home country youth do recognise the difficulties of the people in the Diaspora; especially the problems of the 'refugeecamps'. That is why they don't expect much from them, but more from the early leavers, people that already left before the war and have successfully settled in the hostcountry. In their view they have an advantage compared to people who fled during the war, also because some of those 'recent' refugees were politically engaged and have problems with the government. In general though the people at home don't realise the hardships of the asylum procedures and the difficulty of sustaining a living at the margins of an unknown society. For them the West is only perceived as the hallway to opportunities.

GLOBAL DREAMS AS RITE DE PASSAGE

The positive perceptions of the West are related to the 'global dreams' that many youth in Africa have of going abroad and the strong conviction that doing so is the best way to make their fortune. Migration is by many young people seen as a means for social mobility.[3] Where some years ago the internal migrations from rural to urban areas constituted a rite de passage

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[3] R.M. Mkandawire, *Experiences in youth policy and programme development*, 1998, p. 81.

for many young men, this has now been expanded to the global arena. As earlier mentioned by Akyeampong the Diaspora has become 'a stage for redefining one's social identity.'[4] This does not only involve improvements in financial status but also the experience of seeing more of the world, which is highly valued by Diaspora youth. They feel that seeing more of the world broadens their view and that living in a peaceful society enables them to think better. As Mandyek puts it: 'One does not emigrate only to look for jobs. To emigrate is also to know new things, to broaden one's horizons in such a way one can bring back home what one discovered and learned.'[5] In this same research about Senegalese migrants in Italy Bruno mentions that for the Senegalese travel is an important rite of passage to acquire manhood, training and knowledge.

Indeed some Diaspora youth say it is a privilege to be here and to be able to get good education. Additionally experience with good governance is seen as a valuable asset and many say to learn from Western values like equality of sexes, the coexistence of different lifestyles, the importance of investing in people, good organisation and longterm investments. Most striking though is their positive appraisal of being independent; something they sat is lacking in their home country. It has been in the Diaspora that they learnt to take responsibility and they have become more serious about their future and the investments they need to make for that. This can also be found back in a study on Irish immigrants that all agreed that their lives had been enriched by the experience of emigration. They felt that they had added to their cultural capital particularly in terms of their abilities to take risks and to make choices, and in terms of the development of self-confidence and self-assurance. These qualities, they felt, made them different in a positive way from their peers who had stayed at home.[6]

For some the newly acquired independence can be a break away from the more patriarchal relations and social control that they were used to in their home country. However, for many this transition does not come without difficulties. The transition from traditional value systems and supervision of elders to the freedom of autonomy is especially far-reaching for African Diaspora youth that have migrated to individualistic cultures in the West. They can easily fall in between the two worlds and be confronted with identity crises and apathy. In fact they mention themselves that most of them are not ready for the free choice and tolerance of the Dutch society. They need time to adapt to that and can't make good use of the freedom, which results in many not finding the discipline to go to school.

So we see that the high expectations of the youth and their homefront often stand in sharp contrast with the harsh realities that await migrants in Western societies. Some succeed to deal with the new culture and profit from it. But for many the fortune in the West appears to be difficult to reach and they find themselves excluded from opportunities, restricted by their marginal position as refugee or migrant. The pressure from home to send remittances and to return to show what has been achieved puts a lot of pressure on migrants that 'discover to their chagrin that Western streets are not paved with gold.'[7]

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[4] E. Akyeampong, *Africans in the Diaspora*, 2000, p. 186.
[5] Mandyek in: *From ethnic group to transnational community*, quoted by R. Bruno, 2001.
[6] M.P. Corcoran, *The process of migration and the reinvention of self*, 2002.
[7] E. Akyeampong, *Africans in the Diaspora*, 2000, p. 187.

The tensions between high expectations and harsh realities in the hostcountry function as a big obstacle for Diaspora youth to consider a return. As explained earlier they only want to return with visible achievements and therefore prolong their stay in the Diaspora instead of returning home after the conflicts has come to an end. They will go back to help, but not now. Interestingly enough some of the home country youth understand the choice of their peers to stay in the Diaspora, even though they see it as an injustice to their home country. Especially Liberians say that 'their' people like a flamboyant lifestyle and will easily be tempted to stay abroad, especially in the US. They also understand that the situation at home is not tempting to those in the Diaspora and that a lot of people have a lack of confidence in the situation (security, employment) and the regime back home. They even mention the possibility of a lack of confidence in the people at home, because of working with the wrong young people/leaders or because of misuse of remittances by relatives. So we can see that 'return' and all the ambivalences and tensions related to it are a major obstacle towards cooperation.

THE WEST AS GOOD EXAMPLE?

Despite the hardships of sustaining a living in the hostsociety, the Diaspora youth are of the opinion that they can learn a lot abroad and that the Diaspora has an important role to play in the development of their home country. Their attitude towards the West is very positive and they generally think they can learn from the Western society as well as its history; especially from the reconstruction process Europe went through since WOII. According to them change comes from outside: '… if you interact, mingle, you are within; then you can transform yourself first of all and later your countrymen.' This is not surprising, considering that most of them left a country in total chaos and are now finding themselves in a society where things work relatively smooth. Instead of idealising the home country, which often happens when being in exile (Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2002), this might be different for refugees coming from a country in war. The youth are very aware of the backwardness of their country and shortcomings of their leaders. Although most agree that they should not completely adapt the Western style, they see it as necessary that they learn from the most important elements of the West: their country should adopt the basic foundation of good governance and the good side of Western values. Their attitude towards the 'West' as being an example for the development of their own country seems to develop with the time being here. The more they are integrated and are successful in the Dutch community, the more they seem to adhere to values and customs from here.

This stands in sharp contrast with the youth in the home country who, although valuing the support from the Diaspora, are convinced that change should not come from the West but from themselves. Some of them still adhere to the Pan-African philosophy and want as less help from the West as possible. They believe in the African Renaissance and that Africa has all the necessary potential for development within its own continent.

These differences of orientation might create problems for partnerships between the two

groups as the Diaspora youth want to apply the knowledge and experiences from the West while the home country youth prefer to use traditional knowledge to solve their problems. This brings us to another related problem that might hinder cooperation, namely the owner-ship of the idea and the project. For both groups it is important to initiate 'their own initiative' in their own way and their ambitious youthful nature will make it hard for them to partici-pate in an existing initiative of another group. We already saw this happening in the Diaspora where there is competition between the Brabant and the Rotterdam division of Sierra Leone on the initiative of the umbrella organisation. If we consider the mentioned prejudices, the lack of trust in each others capabilities and the different orientations in what knowledge to use, it will be difficult to share responsibilities in a common project. The Diaspora wants to have 'control' in the beginning to make sure the youth at home are really motivated and not corrupted and that the project is executed according to their own adapted standards; the local youth only see fruitful cooperation if the Diaspora youth consults them on the actual needs and project design and don't want to see Diaspora people imposing something on them. Even though there are some Diaspora youth that realise they should not dictate new values and ways on the local people when sharing their knowledge and experience with the local people, establishing a real dialogue between Diaspora groups and exising groups will be a big challenge, especially in the beginning.

STATUS AND ATTITUDE

When looking at the status of returnees from the Diaspora we come across some ambi-guity. On the one hand people returning from the Diasporas are looked up to as they are expected to have become successful abroad. They are seen as heroes, especially by children and teenagers, and are admired because they are thought to be more equipped and schooled. On the other hand especially the youth I spoke to are a bit cynical about the contribution of people in the Diaspora as the average experience is that returnees from the Diaspora are showing off instead of using their knowledge and wealth for the benefit of the whole commu-nity. This ambivalence towards migrants is also mentioned in a study on Senegalese migrants in Italy: while they are on the one hand contemporary heroes, they are also criticized for using the acquired wealth only for their own well-being instead of investing it in the com-munity.[8]

The flamboyant lifestyle of many returnees is one of the reasons for the ambiguity among the home country youth. Especially from Liberians it is known that they love the 'big life', especially the American way, and like to show off when returning to Liberia. On the other hand Liberians say that the fact that Liberia has been 'formed by the Diaspora' and that the way of life in Liberia has always been orientated to the West, and especially the US, makes it easier for people from abroad to reintegrate. According to the home country youth they are always welcomed back by the local people. In fact they see it as a responsibility for the

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[8] R. Bruno, *From ethnic group to transnational community*, 2001.

Diaspora to return and help, as they are still perceived as blood brothers. The home country youth would like to see more input from the Diaspora especially because they expect a financial impetus that they can use very well because of the difficulties to raise sufficient resources locally. At the same time the support from Diaspora groups does not only have 'real' tangible effects, but can also be a motivation and psychological support for the people in the home country. Contributions from the Diaspora can boost their energy and feelings of unity and hope for the future.

The fact that Diaspora people have a special status could give Diaspora youth an advantage when working for the community as they will easily be listened to by the local people. However, both Diaspora and home country youth acknowledge that this only works if Diaspora people make responsible use of this fact. It all depends on the attitude of the youth returning from the Diaspora: 'People there look up to us, so we could make a difference, but we misuse is. It depends on how you carry yourself.' One of the problems for example of Diaspora support is that many of the Diaspora groups go through the government when donating things to their home country. They like governmental connections, to connect private and business matters, for their own profit and image. This will, just like people returning from the Diaspora and only driving around in their big cars, create tension. But if they live like the local people and are open to them they can establish a lot.

WHAT DO DIASPORA YOUTH HAVE TO OFFER?

Local youth organisations are generally positive about the input Diaspora groups could give. Unfortunately their lack of knowledge on the position of immigrants in the Western societies makes their positive estimation in some cases rather wishful thinking than reality. On the other hand the Diaspora youth are unrealistic in the perceived advantages of their stay abroad compared to their peers back home. Let's have a look at the different dimensions on which the Diaspora is thought to be able to contribute and compare their position with the position of the local youth in order to see what their added value could be.

Financial

First of all the Diaspora is by home country youth seen as a connection to more resources. This can be either directly from those people in the Diaspora that have been successful there and can support projects or invest in their home country; or through contacts people in the Diaspora can establish with donors or Western businesses. People in the Diaspora could encourage investors to come to Africa and provide the platform for such implementation. This financial support is highly needed by the local groups who have difficulties in financing their programmes; some have access to regional donors, but most have to struggle to raise local resources. We have seen though that especially the *youth* in the Diaspora have little financial capacity. They are either restricted to student budgets or find themselves in marginal economic positions, due to a lack of a permit or the difficulties of entering the

labour market. The few that have a good job have a better financial base to become active and support projects in the home country, but they have the problem that they don't want to give up their job in the Netherlands. The Diaspora youth have difficulties of finding the way to donor institutions and don't even manage to find funds for their own organisations. Additionally international donors often prefer projects set up and executed by local people in Africa. Concluding we can say that financial support is not the first advantage of Diaspora youth.

Networks

Home country youth also see a role for people in the Diaspora to advocate in order to raise public awareness among the international community about the situation and problems in their homecountries. Diaspora people could assist in guaranteeing an effective and good information flow between their homecountries and the rest of the world. It is true that there are quite a few African magazines and news papers published in the Diaspora, but these are mostly only read by the African public. The link to the Dutch society and institutions is still difficult to make, especially in the smaller Diaspora communities.

The Diaspora could also play a role in using their network in the Diaspora for the benefit of local organisations, but only people in the Diaspora that are well integrated and have a good job also have a good knowledge of the Dutch society and might know the way to donor organisations and useful contacts. Again this is not the strongest point of the Diaspora youth.

Expertise/experience

The people in the Diaspora have a better chance to learn things; a chance they should grasp according to the home country youth. Youth in the Diaspora should profit from the educational opportunities abroad and be active in organisations wherever they are, so that if they go back they have new ideas and skills, which they can apply in their home country. This is probably the biggest asset of the Diaspora youth: they can profit from educational institutions in the West with quality education and good facilities and they can gain experience in a well functioning democracy. As indicated by the Diaspora youth themselves they also learn a lot from the 'Western' values like individualism, equality of sexes and acceptance of different lifestyles. The continental youth stress these chances, but think that Diaspora youth don't always take these chances. I don't have enough material to conclude on the 'knowledge' profile of both groups; on both sides there are students as well as youth who have started working without higher education. What seems clear though is that the home country youth have more knowledge on peacebuilding issues and conflict transformation through the conferences and trainings that are regularly organised at the continent by ngo's. For the Diaspora youth to the biggest challenge is how to motivate them to use their knowledge for the development of their home country and to facilitate the 'export' of their experiences.

DIASPORA IN THE REGION

Of course there are also a lot of displaced people living in neighbouring countries in the region, in camps or integrated in villages/cities. Youth there can also play a role in peace-building, although their case is quite different from youth in the 'far' Diaspora. For the people in camps the wish to return is probably more present, as life in the camps is not exactly ideal. However, a lack of money is often an obstacle to return home. Often they are supported for their daily living by family members who live in the 'real' Diaspora. Some youth have been lucky to receive scholarships from the UN to follow some courses and others have been able to get some vocational training or experience in organisations. There are youth organisations formed in the camps that try to work on reconciliation and empowerment of the youths, through workshops and theatre etcetera. They feel they have to set an example and reconcile themselves in the camp, before returning home: 'But the youth that fled the war, we are pulling ourselves together in exile and we go back with a new mind, a mind to develop ourselves.'

Some told me that also the youth who have lived in neighbouring countries often feel better than their peers who have stayed back home, because they have had more chance to learn things. The youth organisations try to work on preparing those youth to return with a new mind, prepared to work together with the youth back home instead of putting themselves above the youth back home.

CONCLUSION

We started this chapter with the question whether cooperation between the youth in the home country and the youth in the Diaspora is an option and whether it is already happening. On the last question we can be very short: there are no existing partnerships between youthorganisations at home and youth in the Diaspora. In fact even 'normal' contact between these two groups is very limited. This has led to mutual misperceptions and distrust. The Diaspora youth show a tendency to distinguish themselves from the youth at home by stressing the advantages of going abroad and new experiences. In their opinion the home country youth are dormant and lacking the capability to work on the development of their country. Therefore they see a need to supervise projects from their side and to introduce Western standards that they have learned here. This is exactly what home country youth don't want. They dislike the arrogance of Diaspora people and feel that the Diaspora groups have no knowledge of the local situation and the exact needs of the people on the ground. If Diaspora groups want to contribute they should consult local (youth) organisations. The ownership of projects that is highly valued especially by youth, will probably pose problems for cooperation between the two groups.

The attitude towards the West is another area full of ambivalence and tensions. On the one hand the West is seen as a way to make your fortune and going abroad is for many youth a rite de passage towards manhood and success. These high expectations stand in sharp con-

trast with the harsh reality that most migrants face in the West. They are often at the margins of these societies and have to coop with difficult legal procedures and unemployment. Nevertheless they postpone a return to their home country as the pressure of people at home who expect a 'triumphant return' make it difficult for the youth to return with empty hands. They all say they want to return and help, but not before they have acquired some knowledge and experience here in the West. Additionally the perceived lack of opportunities for them in the home country functions as a strong pushfactor.

At the same time the Diaspora youth adapt to the Western societies, despite the hardships and limited opportunities. They value newly acquired independence and experience of good governance and democracy. They want to use these experiences when setting up projects at home. This in contrast with the home country youth who generally reject copying the Western way and advocate for African solutions for African problems. This could be another factor creating tension between the two groups.

While local people generally look up to returning migrants and see them as heroes, the home country youth have their reservations about this special status. They often see that people returning from the Diaspora rather show off their wealth than that they share it for the benefit of the community. Only if Diaspora people return with the right attitude and behave as equals, they can use their special status for the wellbeing of the community.

Even though home country youth understand that the situation in the home country is not very attractive to the youth in the hostcountry, they see it as their duty to return and offer support. They especially expect a lot from the financial channels and the networks of people in the Diaspora. We have seen though that these expectations are based on misperceptions of the situation of Diaspora youth. They are generally marginalised and don't have a lot of access to resources. Their biggest asset is the fact that they can profit from education and experiences in the Western societies. The challenge remains though how to motivate them to actually use this knowledge for the benefit of their home country and how to bridge the physical and emotional distance between the two groups.

General Conclusion

Let us return to the central question of this research: what is the role of Sierra Leonean and Liberian youth in reconstructing their war torn societies? It has become clear during this research that the most common place classification of youth is at the same time the most powerful and the most neglected one: youth will be tomorrow's society and some of them will be the future leaders. This is especially relevant in post-settlement societies where the success of the peace-agreements and the sustainability of the peace largely depend on the involvement of youth. In Sierra Leone and also Liberia marginalisation and the lack of opportunities for youth was a major reason for the youth to resort to violence, they didn't turn violent for no reason. Neglect of the needs and interests of the youth during the reconstruction will easily draw them back into violence.

There is a double interest in involving youth in the peacebuilding- and reconstruction processes, especially because youth constitute the majority of the population in those African societies. If the peacebuilding processes are 'owned' by youth, who will constitute the majority of tomorrow's society, they have a better chance of being sustainable. At the same time the participation provides youth with meaningful activities that can give them a sense of inclusion in the community instead of feeling pushed to the margins of society.

In this research I have chosen to focus on youth that are already engaged in (youth) organisations. This has a special reason. I am aware that the proportion of youth that is really engaged and motivated to act for change in their society is small. This is why the group that is active is an interesting group as an exception, but especially because I believe they have a lot of potential to motivate other youth to become engaged. As well in the home country as in the Diaspora it is fellow youth that can motivate friends to become engaged in peacebuilding.

THE PRESENT SITUATION/OBSTACLES

Generally speaking the youth from both Sierra Leone and Liberia find themselves in a difficult position. They are marginalized politically as well as economically. This is applicable both to the Diaspora as to the continent. Dwindling economies offer youth little chances on the job markets and in the West it is equally hard to find a good job. Bad governance, fear of youth by present governments and little recognition of the youth as political actors make it difficult for them to influence policies. In the home country youth are trying to let their voice be heard and influence policies, but despite newly established youth ministries there is still a long way to go before youth will be fully accepted as political and social actors in the shaping of society.

From my visit to the youth training conference in Freetown it was quite clear that there is a group of youth that has become actively involved in the reconstruction of their country. Through youth organisations they are engaged in a wide range of peace-building activities and try to lobby for more youth inclusion and participation in decision-making processes. From my interactions and discussions with the youth organisations I found that these youth are generally very well informed about these issues and that they were highly critical of the current situation in their home country. They are every day confronted with the bad state of their societies and many of them say to have become active because they recognise the importance of sustaining the fragile peace that has recently come to their country. Often it were fellow youth that were active in peacebuilding activities that actually motivated them to join such organisations. At the same time the role of peacebuilder gives them a new identity in a context where they have little opportunities to acquire an identity and status via usual pathways like employment. It also opens up new opportunities for them to travel and profit from new experiences at trainingconferences. These new opportunities and the status acquired sometimes seem to overrule the idealistic motivations and can become a threat to their work when they attach too much to leadershippositions or travelopportunities. Also the 'moving' nature of youth reflected in a strong focus on their own career and a desire to initiate new projects can become counterproductive to the creation of sustainable youth structures.

The difficult financial situation of these youth and their organisations is another source for obstacles. The problems of finding funds for their projects creates competition between the different youth groups and limits their freedom. At the political level the desire to be included in decisionmaking processes creates an ambivalent relation towards the authorities. They need the governments approval for support and inclusion, while at the same time they should be critical of the present leadership of their countries. The young generation has the responsibility to make positive changes for the future and they have the difficult task of connecting their countries to the high pace of global developments, especially in the domain of communication technologies. Even though internet facilities are mostly restricted to the capitals, they create new opportunities for the youth groups who intensively make use of the internet to coordinate their regional activities and to connect to the rest of the world. Especially youth organisations that work with ICT's like computers and video cameras attract a lot of young people. So even though it is only a relatively small group that is actually active, there is a good chance that they can influence and motivate other young people in Liberia and Sierra Leone through the peer group approach that I have tried to highlight.

For the Diaspora youth we can conclude that there is some potential, but that it has less materialised yet compared to the youth in the home country. This is partly due to the fact that helping the home country generally became a trend only after the wars came to an end in their home countries. Many Diaspora organisations are relatively new and are still struggling with leadershipproblems and bad organisation. There are more complicated reasons though why the youth involved in these organisations have not yet lead to actual

support to their home country. As Black e.a. indicate we can consider their capability to contribute as made up of their willingness and their capacity to give support to the home country. Their capacity is strongly hampered by the legal procedures in the hostcountry which negatively influences their economic status and their emotional state. Their marginal economic position also give them little access to useful networks in the Dutch society. When looking at their willingness we see a more complicated picture. They all mention to be willing to go back in the future to help for the development of their home country. At the same time though they mention several conditions that have to be fulfilled before returning. They wait for the security situation to be completely save in their home country and they only want to return if they have something to offer. In other words; they want to achieve something in the West in order to be able to live up to the expectations of the people at home. Going abroad is an important rite de passage for young men and is seen as a way to make their fortune and to improve their social standard. Apart from these two conditions the perceived lack of opportunities in the home country is probably another strong pushfactor. Just like the home country youth they are looking for an identity and opportunities and despite the constraints in the hostcountry they still see more chances for themselves in the Diaspora. They are getting used to the new way of life, learn from new values and democracy and their youthful dynamism makes that they easily adapt to the new environment. The attachment to the home country remains, but it is far more the symbolic importance then an actual longing for return. Their culture and fellow nationals function as a central point of identification and solidarity in a new environment, but in political and economic domains there is little to be proud of and there we see that they turn more to the Western world they live in, condemning the backwardness of their own country. They clearly want to differentiate themselves from the youth in their home country who according to them have limited knowledge of the world compared to them.

The increase of transport means and communication technologies have also not lessened the emotional distance to the home country as is often expected. The fact that they are part of a refugee community obstructs the possibilities for transnational linkages. The uncertain legal procedures prevent them from travelling up and down and their marginal economic positions gives them little access to internet where in bigger Diaspora communities internet can function as a unifier and medium to set up projects back home. Apparently the 'global world' is not accessible for everybody and especially minorities in marginalised positions are not profiting from the globalisation-processes.

Overall it seems that the home country youth are better informed, more politically conscious and more successful in the establishment of youth groups. This is applicable to boys as well as girls. Even though the girls in the home country are less in the forefront then the boys and are still struggling with traditional role patterns, there are quite a few strong girls that let their voice be heard through youth- or womenorganisations. In the Diaspora the voice of the women is far less represented in the Diaspora organisations.

As suggested by key figures the bigger involvement of home country youth is probably due to the fact that these youth are confronted very directly on a daily basis with the poor state of

their countries. For them the need to do something about these problems is more pressing than for the people in the Diaspora. The youth in the Diaspora might even have interest in a certain degree of instability in their country as this is a reason for them to justify their stay abroad. Indeed most of the Diaspora youth perceived their country as still being unsafe while especially in Sierra Leone no violent incidents have occurred since the elections in 2002. Still, they continue to say that they have their motherland at heart and want to do something for their country. Especially the older youth express a strong willingness to help their home country. In general they also have more potential for actual involvement in activities back home, because they are more stable, financially and emotionally and have less integrated into the Dutch society then the young ones. However, the overall challenge remains to find a way to translate their willingness into actual and useful contributions at home. They generally don't have good knowledge of the situation in the home country nor do they have actual connections with youth or (youth) organisations at home. Even though their motherland is very important for the Diaspora youth and they feel a strong emotional bond, their actual contribution is little and their relationship to their country remains 'distant'.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOME COUNTRY AND DIASPORA YOUTH

It was interesting to discover that both groups recognise the need for and advantages of cooperation, but that when talking about each other we see that the distance has led to several misperceptions, which in turn create distrust. The home country youth are mainly concerned about the fact that the youth in the Diaspora are disconnected from the real situation on the ground which makes it difficult for them to know what or how to contribute. This implies that Diaspora groups have to consult local groups *if* they want to contribute at all, which is not taken for granted by the home country youth as returnees from the Diaspora often show off instead of using their knowledge and wealth for the benefit of the whole community. Even if Diaspora groups decide to contribute, they often impose their own ideas for projects on the local communities or go through the government to acquire social status. This has created some reservation among the home country youth.

The Diaspora youth have a very low estimation of the capacities of the youth at home. They are seen as ignorant, lacking experience and being corrupt. While they were part of that same group before they came to Europe, they apparently want to distinguish themselves positively from the youth that stayed at home. They stress the advantages of 'seeing' more of the world and the 'ignorance' of the youth in the home country. These negative perceptions lead them to see a need for supervision from their side, at least during the initial stages of any cooperation.

So we can say that there are misperceptions on both sides. Despite their reservations about the motivation of Diaspora youth to contribute, home country youth perceive people in the Diaspora as a potential source for especially finance and a connection to donor or development organisations. Unfortunately their lack of knowledge on the position of immigrants in the Western societies makes their positive estimation in some cases rather wishful think-

ing than reality. They have little knowledge of the hardships faced by youth in the Diaspora, such as the very demanding asylum procedure and the marginalized economic and social position. The Diaspora youth in turn have little trust in the abilities of youth in their home country and are not aware of the initiatives and achievements of active youth groups in their home country. They want to set up projects at home and apply the things they have learned in the West, while the home country youth prefer indigenous solutions above copying the West. All these tensions, including the desire to own a project, pose severe challenges on cooperation between the two groups. Despite the globalisation forces that were believed to bridge the 'emotional' distance between Diaspora communities and their country of origin with the help of transport and communication technologies, the distance between Diaspora and home country youth appears not only to be physical. Also socially and emotionally the migration has caused a distance, which will not be easy to bridge.

Recommendations

Despite these misperceptions and obstacles I still think there can be a way to make use of the characteristics of youth. Let us see what their added value is and what their potential roles could be. The research has looked at the following dimensions: financial, knowledge, social networks.

Financial

Financially both groups have little capacity due to lack of employment opportunities. But they do have a chance for reaching donors for their projects, if they are supported and well organised. For now the youth groups in the home country are more successful in finding ways to donor-organisations. This is partly a result of the policies of donor agencies that prefer to support activities that are being organised and implemented locally in the South.

Knowledge

On the knowledge dimension we can say that youth have little experience, but most of them have access to education and additional trainings and conferences, especially in the home country. Diaspora youth have the advantage of living and learning from Western societies that generally respect democracy and reject authoritarianism and bad governance. They also profit from learning institutions in the Netherlands that strive to provide a high standard of education and relatively have a better financial position to create a stimulating learning environment. Generally speaking the lack of experience of youth is for a great part compensated by their enthusiasm and dynamism. They learn while doing and therefore activities in (youth)organisations should be stimulated as it is a valuable way of gaining experience.

Social/networks

In the social domain the experiences of Diaspora youth and home country youth could complement each other very well. The home country youth have a good connection to the local communities and know exactly what is happening on the ground and what is needed. The youth in the Diaspora can provide connections with the broader Diaspora and eventually with Western development agencies.

The added value of youth can especially be found in their dynamism and energy. Youth are more open to learn and adapt to new things. This is especially an advantage for the ones being abroad who adopt new values and learn from the Western societies they live in. Additionally the fact that youth are more open to change than older generations is especially of vital interest in a world where the pace of (technological) developments is very high. Youth are the ones who can connect their societies to the global technological developments and they are the ones who first profit from increased possibilities to travel and to communicate via new ICTs. However, although these global developments open up opportunities, also for African youth, we have seen that they are not fully used yet. The possibilities of using the internet are often restricted by limited access to computers. Migration to the West could be a way of investing in the human capital of African countries, but migration is still rather seen as a problem than as a resource. A creative approach is needed to harness the added value and potential of present Diaspora communities. A definitive return of Diaspora members is not the only way to reverse the brain drain; the flexibility of youth, both physically as emotionally, should be taken advantage of.

HOW DO WE HARNESS THE POTENTIAL?

I suggest a double approach, termed as 'mind and money'. Providing for their own livelihoods is a first condition for youth to become active. It is their first concern and only a few will be able to combine struggling for their own bread with helping others. So for both groups creating employment opportunities should be a priority. Especially to interest Diaspora youth for the home country the push factor of unemployment must be reduced. If not formally, then in informal ways. Economic empowerment is important for the self-esteem of young people and as a safeguard against violence and anti-social behaviour.

At the same time it is essential to also work on the minds of people. Education is the basis of building human capital. Without education activities have less chance to be effective and sustainable. But education is also not a simple panacea to all problems; it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. Knowledge has to be linked to the reality and the youth especially need to be guided in how to apply the knowledge. For both groups organisational skills are very important to be able to manage their organisations in a good and effective way.

Apart from all the external conditions, the attitude of the youths themselves is also essential. Self-reflection and a willingness to learn are needed to become indeed effective. Besides knowledge they also need life-skills, communication and conflict resolution skills, inculcation of positive values and openness for reflexion and self-criticism. Peacebuilding is reflected mostly in personal attitudes and a person's position towards money and power. Developing responsibility and respect for others are life-long learning projects, but awareness of the necessity of these values is the start. These things should be incorporated into training-conferences and leadershiptrainings.

For stimulating cooperation between the both groups trust and good information about each others situation is the first requisite. They have to perceive the other group as a good

partner for setting up projects, which will involve contact and communication between the two groups. To sustain an effective relationship the two groups have to be able to communicate easily. Access to internet and knowledge of the possibilities of the medium are very important. The local youth have to get informed about the difficulties of the asylumprocedure and the position of immigrants in the Netherlands, while the Diaspora youth need know about the situation in the home country and the initiatives of youth organisations there.

Even though it will on both sides probably remain small groups that will be really willing to engage themselves in peacebuildingactivities to develop their country, I think it will be worthwhile to support those ones that are already active or willing and to empower them to become more effective and to involve and motivate their peers.

Home country youth

Material

Youth need more access to funding opportunities so they can finance their programmes. Very important for them is to have an office space, mobility and effective communication means to coordinate activities, like websites and telephones. The donor field is very inaccessible for small, local youth organisations that most of the time don't have the needed connections.

– It might be useful to establish a desk as intermediate between youth-organisations and donor-organisations and businesses/companies. This desk could function as an exchange source for project proposals and donors or businesses interested in funding youth initiatives. This desk could also draw up an inventory of the needs of youth organisations like material support (computers), technical support or training needs.

Knowledge/skills/ experience

Knowledge and training are very important to give youth the necessary tools to develop effective youth-programs, but they have to be linked to the local reality and lead to sustainable action. Conferences can be useful if they really offer youth new tools, but they should not become 'fun-trips' for youth-leaders. The learning method is also very important. Participatory methods have the best results and stimulate a critical attitude and creativity. Depending on the starting capacity of the person we can think of different levels of education:

– Vocational training, setting up businesses
– IT-training, computer training schools
– Management/organisational training for youth active in organisations (internships)
– Student exchange programs/ internships in (government) institutions in the West
– Leadership trainings

For all these different types of education it is crucial that there is a connection to the job-market and that youth get support in *applying* the knowledge they have gained. They have to learn how to make effective use of their knowledge and if there are little opportunities how to create new ones. In order to achieve that there should be worked as much as possible with practical internships, cooperation with business and government already during the training period.

Economic empowerment

It is evident that there are far too little jobs available for the youth and international NGO's are mostly not working on job-creation in the reconstruction of the countries. So it is up to the youth themselves to be creative and come up with ideas on how to provide for their liveli-hood. It would be good if they have some guidance with developing ideas and support for actually implementing them. (International) NGO's who are working for the reconstruction of the country could take a lead in this instead of only focusing on physical reconstruction and rehabilitation of ex-combatants.

– Youth organisations and ngo's could initiate brainstorming sessions for youth and support initiatives of youth in their own communities or quarters.

Participation

Youth need to be allowed to participate in decision-making processes and to be recognised as actors and partners. Better relationships with ministries and civil society organisations should lead to consultation of youth on youth issues and support for youth-initiatives. Youth groups are already trying to lobby for more inclusion in governmental structures, but they could use more support. Civil society should get more support from INGO's to strengthen its structure and influence.

– There is a need for support for youth initiatives on a national and regional level. Youth councils and youth parliaments should be supported and accepted by governments and regional institutions.
– Youth ministries should get more recognition and budget to really investigate the needs of youth and set up effective youth structures.

Networking

It is very important that the various youth groups know from each other what is going on so that they can bundle their efforts and create a broad movement across the region. Also it is important for them to link up with existing initiatives like global or regional campaigns and networks, instead of only re-inventing the wheel each time. Also a link to the Diaspora could enhance their work.

– Youth organisations should have more access to internet and should know the way to use interactive websites where activities and ideas can be exchanged.

Diaspora youth

For the Diaspora we can say that the idea that their home country does not have anything to offer to them must be changed. If they can see that they themselves can set up things there and that they can profit from that, even if that is not financially, the willingness to help back home might be translated into action. At the same time they should be aware of different ways of helping back home; definite return is not the only option. Alternative ways like temporary workvisits and cooperation with youthgroups back home should be developed and facilitated.

Material

Diaspora organisations as well have to survive without external financial support. They manage to function only with membership fees and fundraising events, while their own financial base is also very weak. This makes it difficult to them to find the financial ways to offer help to their home country. With small financial support they could be more 'professional' and effective.

- Provide easy access to funding opportunities so they can provide for an office space, money for administrational costs, travel costs etc.
- Fundraising events could be built out so as to also reach the Dutch citizens; mostly they are purely visited by fellow nationals or other Africans.
- Connection to businesses
- Provide help by finding jobs, if possible jobs that match their interest.

Knowledge/skills/ experience

The stay of Sierra Leonean and Liberian youth in the Netherlands is a valuable opportunity to attain new knowledge and experiences. They should be encouraged to profit from these opportunities through easy access to learning institutions, also during the asylum procedure, in all areas. They should follow their own interest and training can vary from vocational skills, setting up businesses to internships and academic training. I think it is useful to make a distinction between different groups:

Youth in Diaspora organisations. Harnessing their potential can be done through:

- Strengthening the capacity of the Diaspora organisations (training and support in organisational, communicational skills, network with other Diaspora organisations)
- Facilitating contact with organisations back home with which they could cooperate. Those organisations could indicate what support they could need so that the help from the Diaspora organisations responds to actual needs on the ground (this can be very basic, like they have tried to do already: collecting educational material, computers, etc.)

Students. They don't have the time and means to be really involved yet, but they are a potential group with a lot of ideas on the development of their country. They should be encouraged to develop those ideas and supported once they have finished their studies to find ways to implement them. Their involvement should be stimulated through:

– Stimulating them to develop ideas on how they/the Diaspora could support back home
– Creation of possibilities to help back home (e.g transferring their knowledge to their peers back home, exchange programs, internships back home)
– Information about these possibilities and stimulating them to develop ideas on how they could support back home.
– Enhance their knowledge through internships or jobs in Dutch organisations or in institutions in the home country like the Special Court. This needs to be encouraged and facilitated.

Professionally skilled youth. Youth who have acquired any professional skills here can very well use those to set up business in their home country or train peers in short projects. Youth that have a job here, which they don't want to leave, might be willing to give some support through temporary work visits.

– They can be used for short training sessions back home and setting up businesses back home in collaboration with youth/people there while keeping their job here.

Artists. Artists can play an important role in awareness raising and reconciliation processes, as well in the Diaspora as in the home country. Theatre can be used for sensitisation, reconciliation and promoting dialogue between different groups. The same shows or plays can be used to establish a bridge between the Africans in the West and the Dutch people, but also for bringing African youth from different groups and countries together in one theatre group. This can especially be valuable in linking up youth in the Diaspora with their peers in the homecountries. This can be project based which allows artists to have their base in the West if they wish. Artists can also be used to motivate and stimulate youth to follow their dreams through workshops in which they can find out what their talents and strengths are.

Networking

Networks are very important to sustain aid efforts. Networks should as well cover the Diaspora communities in the Netherlands, as the wider Diaspora in the West, but should also reach back to the African continent. In the Diaspora communities people should be aware, at least on a national base, what other Diaspora organisations are doing (the umbrella organisations have a function in this). Connection to the wider Diaspora can serve for exchanging experiences and bundling efforts, while the network to the home country is essential for deciding on the right way of support and bringing the support to the right place.

– Spread information about organisations like Afroneth, organise conferences or meetings on the role of Diasporas in peacebuilding where different organisations can meet

and make these events attractive for youth (combine it with parties, sports events, video material about the home country, visits of local youth representatives, invite broader Diaspora)

Cooperation

The contacts and Diaspora networks should be linked to the networks on the continent. Contact between youth-groups in the home country and Diaspora youths is the most important condition for stimulating cooperation. Exchange of information about each others activities should be stimulated through interactive websites and organisations like Afroneth that can function as 'central' point where organisations can find information on other organisations. Also the establishment of 'factfinding' institutions on the ground in Africa (as recommended by Afford) that would provide information on (youth)projects ongoing in Africa and what kinds of support is needed from Africans in the Diaspora can be very helpful. Another important condition to make cooperation possible is to lessen the mutual distrust and lack of information on the situation of their peers. I would suggest the following actions:

– Inform local youth-organisations on the situation of Diaspora groups and the asylum-procedure through videos, conferences, interactive websites.
– Inform Diaspora youth on the situation in the home country and the needs there and make this information more accessible to them through websites, video-conferences, internet-fora and meetings with local youth groups. Diaspora organisations could have close contact with youth-organisations in the home country and inform their members during their meetings.
– Let them both have their 'own' part in the project with full responsibility for that task.
– Organise joined conferences/trainings e.g. on project management for Diaspora groups and local youth groups where they can meet and discuss how they can help each other. While working together combined projects might develop naturally.
– Organise field visits to youth groups in their home country or to asylum centres in the Netherlands, depending on the location of the training.

Discussion and reflection on research process

A research process is always a dynamic process characterised by extremities of ecstasy and perceived hopelessness. So was this one. In general reflection gives way to an overall feeling of satisfaction because of the many positive experiences that resulted from the research. A closer look reveals that this positive association is mainly linked to external circumstances that were related to or created by the research. The research itself was a more difficult process. There are quite a few lessons learnt during the research process, which I will indicate here.

First of all: the importance of the **preparation** of the research. Although the importance of preparation by reading and making a very detailed structure of what you want to know and how you want to do it is always stressed, it stays equally tempting to start off with the fieldwork on a too early moment. In this case I was forced by the dates of the conference in Freetown to deviate from the usual procedure. I had to prepare for the conference in 6 weeks; reading some literature and also getting an overview of the Diaspora field before going to the conference. This meant that I didn't have my literature study ready before I went and that the actual focus of my research was still in the shifting phase. This has severely hampered the consistency of the research. When leaving for Sierra Leone my intention was to focus on the Diaspora instead of on the concept of youth. This has influenced the direction of my interviews which focused on the relationship between continent and Diaspora: not on the situation of youth organisations in the home country. The lack of preparation made that my questions were not focused enough, that they did not fill all the dimensions I would have liked to cover and that I had not thought enough about the desired results/outcomes and what new things I wanted to bring with this research. This is clearly related to a good study of existing literature, which I did too late. All this has led me to doubt a little bit on the credibility/transferability of my results. The sample was too small and I didn't ask everybody the same questions.

A related lesson for me is in the field of the **personal position of the researcher.** Four years of study have infiltrated me with the importance of 'objectivity'. A researcher should not influence the field he is working on, or at least as little as possible, and should not incorporate his or her personal values in the conclusions. However, without denying the importance of objectivity, I think subjectivity cannot be excluded from the research. The choice for the subject, the choices during the research, the selection of data, everything is influenced by the personal baggage of the researcher. And I don't think that should be problem; in fact I have learnt how important it is. For me it is very important to do research where I can put

my 'heart' in. For the sake of scientific interest I have shortly adjusted my focus to Diaspora instead of youth; but I soon found out that my reasoning wanted to have youth as a central point, so I decided to change back to my original starting point. Unfortunately I missed some data through this shifting, but I am happy I learnt this point.

I also realised that even during the research process you can use the research for 'empowering' purposes already. I don't have to restrain myself from raising awareness among my respondents just because I am the researcher; rather the interviews with the Diaspora youth were ideal to inform them about youth initiatives in the home country or organisations in the Netherlands (I didn't do this much because I realised it too late). Research may and even should be (in my view) socially committed.

DIFFICULTIES MET DURING THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Diaspora setting

Access to the field

I have not been able to do as extensive fieldwork as I would have wished. It took more time then I expected to get contact with the organisations and to attend meetings. Meetings were mostly once a month, and especially with the smaller organisations the meetings were often cancelled due to a lack of members. Cultural events were also not so frequent as I would have wished. I have also made the mistake of focusing too much on one or two key figures that were very willing to help, but restrained the possibilities for me. I should have created several entrances instead of one.

Survey

The selection of the respondents has in practice diverted from the initial plan. The criteria of active and 'renewing' people were too high. I soon found out that it was challenging enough to find sufficient willing respondents who were member of a Diaspora organisation. Also the first step of the questionnaires did not appear to be useful. The questionnaires were too long to be filled in on the spot, during meetings, and I didn't expect to get them back by post. A lot of people I wouldn't meet again. I finally made a shorter version, but at that time I didn't attend meetings anymore. Instead I used key figures and the 'snowball' method to get my respondents and I identified interesting respondents from the meetings I attended. I tried to cover most of the various Diaspora organisations, to have equal numbers of respondents from both countries and to be gender sensitive. This last criteria was not met at all; most meetings were exclusively visited by men and it was hard to find the women.

The interviews were very intensive and I immediately found out that life histories would take too much time. It was already a challenge to cover the subjects of their involvement, their motivation and activities in one hour. Many interviews took me half a day, including

the travelling to the respondents. This is one of the major reasons that I didn't manage to interview more then 20 people in the Diaspora.

The triangulation of the participant observation, the key figures and the interviews was very helpful though. The attended meetings gave me a good inside of the social interaction within the communities and allowed me to put into context some of the individual sayings.

Home country setting

It was difficult to keep the role of researcher in the vibrant atmosphere of the conference. I soon took on the role of participant, which I only got out from when doing the interviews with the respondents. My participant-role allowed me to really get an insight in the ideas of the participants through the conference-sessions and informal talks. The access was in this case no problem. Only the access to other youth organisations in Freetown was difficult. I visited some groups but these visits were too short to really be useful for my research. The use of key figures again appeared more valuable. Intensive contact with one key figure that had a central position in the youthfield gave more insight in the whole situation of youth and the difficulties and relations.

Survey

The interviews with the participants of the conference were somehow difficult to plan as the programme of the conference was very intensive. Nevertheless I have succeeded to almost interview all the people I had in mind. The interviews were very useful and were complemented by the discussions during the sessions of the conference. The only problem with the interviews was that, due to the intended shift to Diaspora focus, I have only focused on the relationship with the Diaspora and not on the position of youthgroups in Africa. This has been compensated a bit by my experiences during the organisation of the Mano River Union Peace Caravan. The three weeks that I worked with the members of the parliament in Conakry can be regarded as participant observation, even though my research was not the main reason to work with them. Additional information on the position of youth groups in Africa have been gathered from interviews with key figures, email contact after the conference and literature from internet. The questionnaires did proof to be useful in this setting where people had 10 days to complete them. I handed them out to all participants, which were mostly from West-Africa but also from elsewhere in Africa. I have compared them with the data from the interviews (which I only did with people from Sierra Leone and Liberia) and didn't find any striking differences between people from other countries, so I have used them to make my findings from Sierra Leonean and Liberian people stronger. From the 30 questionnaires about 15 were returned.

TIMEFRAME

The research has taken me longer then I expected, but I have only seen this as a positive development as it was mainly due to additional activities that resulted from the research, like the peace caravan in the Mano River Union planned for August but taking place in November 2004, involvement in the organisation of that event, and activities related to the African Students Conference 2004, which had youth as its central theme.

TRANSFERABILITY

How credible are the results? Although the sample has been too small, it is valuable as a 'case'. It will be difficult to really generalise to all Sierra Leonean or Liberian youth, but the research surely gives an indication of the activities and position of Sierra Leonean and Liberian youth active in peacebuilding/youth-organisations in their country and Diaspora youth living in the Netherlands. Most valuable is the part on the relationship between home country and Diaspora because that is a domain where no research has been done yet. African refugee-Diasporas in Europe have gotten little attention in general, and particularly in relation to transnationalism and 'youth'. After all it was not the aim of the research to generalise. Of course you would like to extent your findings to a bigger group then just your respondents; I have done that to a certain extent, talking about youth active in youth organisations or member of Diaspora organisations. I am very aware that a more extended research could come up with differing results, but this research can be seen as a first indication of ideas and positions. It points to some interesting subjects and domains that could use more research like the relationship between home country and Diaspora youth; the level of 'transnatioinality' of refugee Diaspora youth, the function of the identity of peacebuilders and the importance of reflexion and leadershiptrainings for youth leaders.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Specified research questions

1. Do youth contribute to peacebuilding processes? (Diaspora and continent)
   Why or why not?

   – What resources do they have? (knowledge/skills, finance, information, time, social)
   – What are their interests and motivation to be engaged in peacebuilding?
   – How does the situation in the home country affect their contributions (government, policies, support, economic and security situation)
   – How does the situation in the hostcountry affect Diaspora youth? (perceived hostility; legal status, job opportunities)

   If yes, how?

   – What are their ideas about how they can contribute?
   – How are they organised?
   – What are their main activities?
   – What difficulties do they face?

2. Are African youth considered to be a special actor in peace building processes?

   – Are they included in decision making processes? Why or why not?
   – Are there special youth policies? Why or why not?
   – Are they supported? Why or why not?
   – What can be the added value of African youth?

3. What is the relationship between youth in the Diaspora and youth at the continent?

   – What are their mutual perceptions?
   – What can be the added value of Diaspora youth?
   – Is cooperation an option, how do they think about that?

4. How can their potential be harnessed?

   – How can their contributions be improved?

Appendix 2. Detailed research methods

INTRODUCTION

This explorative research has used qualitative methods to gain more knowledge about the role of African youth (Sierra Leone and Liberia) from both home country and Diaspora in peacebuilding activities in their (home)country. Hereby an inductive approach has been used in which the findings/outcomes of the research have lead to some empirical generalisations. In line with the ideas of *interpretivism* the *understanding* of human behaviour played a central role. By seeing things through the eyes of the observed people, meaning has been given to their behaviour.

WHERE

Most of the research has taken place in existing situations: fieldwork in The Netherlands has been taking place in the field of activities of the Diaspora organisations. This was mainly be in the bigger cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam where the biggest Diaspora organisations are based. Fieldwork has also be done in Sierra Leone at the Face-to-face training seminar '*Youth transforming* conflict' for Westafrican youth leaders organised by United Network of Young Peacebuilders (Unoy Peacebuilders) and the Network University (Amsterdam) in April 2004 in Freetown. Even though this was not really a natural environment, the conference brought together a lot of youth that were interesting for this research and who have been interviewed. Apart from the conference some observations have been gathered from youth or organisations operating from Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone. Additionally I have used my experiences from working with the Mano River Union youth parliament in Conakry (Guinea) and Sierra Leone. In October and November 2004 I worked together with them in Conakry to organise a Peace Caravan through the Mano River Union (Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia).

WHEN

The research took place in the period between February 2004 and January 2005. The conference in Freetown took place from 18–29 April 2004 and the Peace Caravan in November 2004.

WHO

The subjects of this research were youth aged between 18–35 from Sierra Leone and Liberia living in their home country and in The Netherlands and who are already active in peace-building activities through Diaspora organisations or youth organisations in the home country. The youth from the homecountries have been selected from the participants of the trainingconference on conflict transformation in Sierra Leone. The youth from the Diaspora have been selected through Diaspora organisations from the two countries that are based in the Netherlands.

Home country

At the training conference I have had interviews with nine (9) people:

Sierra Leone

- – Isata Jalloh, secretary Campaign for Good Governance (NGO)
- – Mohamed Sesay, coordinator Children and Youth for Peace Network
- – Bockarie Enssah, Country Representative, Commonwealth Youth Caucus

Liberia

- – Fred Barlue, youth volunteer Refugee peace and conflict resolution project Buduburam (Liberian refugee camp in Ghana)
- – Finley Karngar, country representative West African Youth Network Liberia
- – Arthur Becker, Mano River Union Students Union
- – Andrew Lendor, Liberian Refugees Peace council (Liberian refugee camp in Sierra Leone)

Apart from the interviews I have gathered information from the questionnaires handed out to all participants of the conference and through informal talks with the participants and the members of Unoy Sierra Leone and the West African Youth Network that were co-organisers of the conference. From the 35 questionnaires handed out 18 were completed and returned. Among these 16 there were 6 females and 12 males. Besides Sierra Leone (5) and Liberia (4) there were questionnaires returned from the following nationalities: Nigeria (2), Benin, Senegal, Guinea, Gambia, Ivory Coast (2) and DR Congo.

Diaspora

The youth from the Diaspora have been selected through Diaspora organisations from the two countries that are based in the Netherlands and via key figures and the snowball

technique. I have interviewed ten (10) Liberians (three girls) and ten (10) Sierra Leoneans that belonged to the following organisations:

Sierra Leone

- Sierra Leone Humanitarian Organisation (SLHO, Rotterdam)
- Sierra Leone Progressive Union (SLPU, Tilburg)
- Sierra Leone Association of Development Amsterdam (Slada)
- Sierra Leone Educational Foundation (Silnef, Best)
- Sierra Leone Organisation Dordrecht

Liberia

- Liberian Association Holland
- Liberian Integrated Family (Enschede)
- Bengoma (for mandingo people)
- Netlib

HOW

This research has worked with several qualitative research methods to obtain the information that was aimed for. As the research took place in two settings, namely the Diaspora community in The Netherlands and the training-conference for Westafrican youthleaders in Sierra Leone, it would have been necessary to use the same methods to make a comparison between these two settings. There were several practical reasons why this was not possible. Because of lack of financial means, time and security reasons no fieldwork could be done in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Therefore the part of the home country youth was restricted to the training-conference in Freetown. This made it impossible to use a strictly comparative design. Rather the use of two groups can be seen as a **multiple-case study**, to give a broader image of how youth are contributing to peacebuilding than when focusing on just one case. The different socio-cultural settings in which these youth are operating has lead to some observations of differences between the two groups, but this has not been the main aim.

In this research an **idiographic** approach has been used, in which the focus is on highlighting a special group of youth that are positively contributing to peacebuilding. It was not the aim of the study to make generalizations about Westafrican youth. The following principles of qualitative research have guided the research:

Seeing through the eyes of the people studied
I find it important in this research to get some insight in the perspective of the youth studied and to show through this research how they look at the situation in their home country and their own contribution to peace.

Description and emphasis on the context
In this explorative study a big part is about describing the activities and ideas of the youth and at the same time explaining their behaviour. This could not be done without looking at the specific environment in which they operate and emphasizing the contextual understanding of social behaviour.

Emphasis on process
In this research attention is given to the dynamics of social life and how behaviour and ideas unfold over time. The participants have been asked to reflect on the processes leading up to their present position.

Setting one: Liberian and Sierra Leone Diaspora in The Netherlands

To describe the contribution to peacebuilding of youth from the Dutch Diasporacommunities of Sierra Leone and Liberia I have carried out fieldwork. Fieldwork was in this case the best way for describing and explaining the behaviour and ideas of the youth studied, as it entails the involvement of the researcher in the field and social life of these people. Methodical triangulation has been used to ensure that the different aspects of the field were covered. The different methods used were participant observation, survey and existing data.

Most substantial part of the information has been gathered by using survey methods. To reach a large group of youths and investigate their activities I planned to use a questionnaire. I wanted to give this questionnaire to all youth active in Diaspora organisations or youth active in peacebuilding activities through other ways. Out of this group I intended to select interesting cases to have more in depth interviews with. I wanted to select these cases on the following criteria: they should have been active for some time in peacebuilding activities and have practical experience; their activities would ideally be renewing, e.g. cultural activities (music, arts, drama), making use of ICT's. In the discussion of the research process I have indicated that this has not actually worked out the way I planned. Finally most information came from interviews and not the questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews have been used to find out what motivates these youth to be engaged in peacebuilding or why not. Although there was a list of topics to be covered, the questions and structure of the interview were very open, allowing the participants to give their own contribution and leaving them to choose what they wanted to tell. This was also done to take in consideration the possibility of traumatic experiences related to the conflict in the home country. Additional interviews have been held with key figures to get an overview of the field and the problems; these key figures were not always young people as it proved to be useful to also get the opinion of people from the older generation.

Interviewing was chosen as method as it is the best method to get through to the ideas, motivations and histories of people. However, as these personal accounts can be strongly subjectively coloured, participant observation was used as an additional method to see the actual behaviour of these people. This was also important to get an insight in the social relations working in these communities that were influencing the individual behaviour. I

have attended some meetings, cultural activities and other related activities. I have tried to have as much variation as possible in the time and locations when observing/participating to prevent a one-sided picture. Attending different and as much occasions as possible will enhance the understanding of the group by relating in different ways to the participants and also witnessing the 'backstage' world (Goffman). Unfortunately this has been restricted by the frequency of the occasions. Language sometimes caused some problems when attending public meetings or events when the Sierra Leone people talked in Krio, but this has been solved through using a key informant as 'translator'.

Existing literature on Diaspora organisations (Afroneth and Afford have already done some preliminary research) and documents from the organisations have been used as additional information.

Access to the field has in the beginning been facilitated by Afroneth, an organisation that supports Africans living in the Netherlands to participate in Dutch-Africa policy making. Once contact had been established with Liberian and Sierra Leone organisations, leaders or interesting respondents from these organisations functioned as key informants and the snowball technique was used to sample additional participants.

Setting two: Sierra Leone Training Conference

To analyse the activities of youth living and acting in their home country, the research was mainly restricted to the survey-method. Through questionnaire and interviews the activities and motivations of the youth have been investigated, in the same way as the Diaspora group. At the conference there has also been the possibility of participant observation during the sessions of the conference. Even though this was not the natural environment of these youth, it gave good inside in their opinions and ideas about peacebuilding and their role in that. I have also visited some youth organisations in Freetown like IEARN (International Education and Resource Network) and Peace links, but these visits were too short to really be useful for the research. The time I spent with a key figure in the youth field though was very valuable to get some inside in the field through his experiences. The lack of fieldwork has been compensated for some part by the experiences while working with the Mano River Union Youth Parliament. The three weeks that I worked with them in Conakry for organising the Peace caravan and their 1st parliamentary session gave me a good insight in how they work, what their relations are with other youth organisations and with the authorities.

Sampling in this setting has for a big part already been done through the selection of the participants for the trainingconference by UNOY Peacebuilders. The criteria used by UNOY Peacebuilders for the selection are in line with the criteria of the researcher, namely that the youth have already been active for some time in youth organisation and have experience with peacebuilding activities. For this research the participants from Sierra Leone and Liberia were all potential respondents.

ROLE

When doing participant observation there are several possible positions on the scale of involvement that the researcher can take. Gold (1958) has classified four roles ranging from 'complete participant' through 'participant-as-observer' and 'observer-as-participant' to 'complete observer'. Apart from the practical difficulties of the researcher's identity as an outsider in a black community, I have chosen to take an overt role because this enabled me to take notes and allowed for additional ways of gathering information like interviewing. But rather then choosing one role, I adhere to the view of Gans (1968) that the different roles can coexist during a research project. When attending meetings or taking interviews the role of total researcher is appropriate, while when joining in cultural festivities the researcher can become a total participant. In other situations the middle way of researcher-participant will be most useful. This has proven to be useful; in the Diaspora meetings and during interviews I took the role of total researcher, while during the informal events and moments during the conference I was more participant. Also in Guinea I have been a total participant which allowed me to really get an insight in all aspects of their work.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability is a difficult criterion in qualitative research as it is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable. Naturally it is impossible to 'freeze' a social setting.

Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research. There are different types of validity that can be distinguished from which some are also relevant in qualitative research. Internal validity has to do with the match between observations and the theory or concepts that are developed. The participation in the social life of a group over a long period makes a high level of congruence between concepts and observations possible. External validity refers to the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings. This is a problem when using casestudy designs or small samples. Ecological validity is concerned with the question of whether social scientific findings are applicable to people's everyday, natural social settings. This is especially relevant when using unnatural settings, but also when using interview methods. Participant observation is a method with a high ecological validity.

The concepts of reliability and validity are mainly geared to quantitative research focusing on measurements. Some researchers have chosen to use these criteria also for qualitative research, but have adopted them slightly. Other researchers have proposed alternative terms of assessing qualitative research. I have chosen to use the concept of 'trustworthiness' that has been proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a criterion. Each aspect of trustworthiness has a parallel with the 'quantitative' criteria:

Credibility (internal validity)

As I adhere to the view that there is no absolute truth about the social world but that there can be several accounts, the acceptability of this research relies on the credibility of the findings. This has been attained by making use of triangulation through the usage of several methods (participant observation, survey, existing data).

Transferability (external validity)

When using case-studies the generalisation of the findings is a difficult point. Some argue that it is not the purpose of this research design to generalize to other cases or populations. Others consider thick descriptions, rich accounts with a lot of details as kind of databases for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other settings.

In this research generalisation is not the main purpose. It has given an description of the two cases and it has found some general patterns in the motivations and profiles of the specific youth groups (active in peacebuilding or member of Diaspora organisations) that explain why they got involved in peacebuilding or why not.

Dependability (reliability)

A way of ensuring reliability is the 'auditing' approach, which entails keeping complete records of all phases of the research process, so that they can be 'controlled' by peers. This is not very popular as it is a very demanding task. Still, giving good records and accounts of the researchprocess is in this research considered to be contributing to the reliability.

Confirmability (objectivity)

Although complete objectivity is impossible in social research, it should be the aim of the researcher to not overtly allow personal values or theoretical inclinations to direct the research in a certain direction. This has been tried to attain in this research through an open approach and reflexivity. The role of the researcher as mediating the views of the subjects to other people has inevitably influenced the account given of their ideas and behaviour though. I have tried to indicate the demarcation line between observations and interpretations and to give my personal opinion only in the recommendations.

For a more in depth reflexion on the research methods and process see Discussion of research process at the end of the thesis.

Appendix 3. Introduction letters

Faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen
Utrecht, March 2004

Universiteit Utrecht

Dear Sir/Madam,

By means of this letter I would like to inform you about a research that I am setting up about **the role of African youth in peacebuilding** in their homecountries, hereby giving attention to youth in the Diaspora as well as to youth in the homecountry. This research will be the MA-thesis for finishing my social sciences studies (conflictstudies) at the University of Utrecht.

For this research I am partly working together with United Network Of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY), an international organisation that tries to support youth that are active in the domain of peacebuilding all over the world. They are often confronted with the fact that the role of youth in the development and the (re)construction of their country is not recognised and therefore not supported. Much the same can be said about the role of Diaspora-organisations, whose positive role in the development of their homecountry is only recently being given more attention. This research hopes to contribute to the recognition of the potential of youth in peacebuilding.

As little research has been done yet on this subject this research aims to make a first investigation of how youth in the Diaspora try to contribute to peacebuilding and the reconstruction of their country and which difficulties they are facing. 'Youth' refers to people between the ages of 18 and 30: young adults. The focus will be on two West African countries in the post-conflict phase: **Sierra Leone** and **Liberia**.

I am approaching you hoping that you or your organisation is willing to contribute to this research. I will get into contact in the near future to ask for your co-operation. Please do not hesitate to call me if you would like to have any additional information.

Thank you for your assistance.

Kind regards,

Rozemarijn van West
030-6704006 / 06-47440906
roosvanwest@hotmail.com

INTRODUCTION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS OF THE CONFERENCE IN FREETOWN

Utrecht, March 2004

Dear all,

I would like to introduce myself to you, as I will also be present at the training conference in Sierra Leone in April! I am a Dutch student social sciences and I have been working some time for UNOY Peacebuilders. I am now setting up a research on the role of African youth in peacebuilding, which will be the MA-thesis for finishing my studies.

Just like you I think that youth can play a very important and positive role in peacebuilding and the reconstruction of their countries. It is surprising how little attention is given to the role of youth and I hope that my research can contribute a little bit to the recognition of the positive potential of youth.

My research will focus on youth in homecountries but also on youth in the Diaspora (The Netherlands). I will investigate the activities, motivation and ideas on peacebuilding and the difficulties that youth are facing in implementing their activities. I have taken a broad definition of youth (18-30) and my research will focus on two postconflict countries: Liberia and Sierra Leone. This conference will be a chance for me to speak with you people, who are active in the field of peacebuilding! I look forward to meeting you and hope that you will be willing to contribute to this research with your experiences. I will arrive in Freetown some days before the conference starts, on the 12th of April, so maybe I can already meet some of you then. I would like to ask you if you can bring reports or evaluations of projects you participated in to the conference?
Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to have any additional information!

Warmest regards,

Rozemarijn van West
roosvanwest@hotmail.com

Appendix 4. Questionnaires

QUESTIONNAIRE AFRICAN YOUTH AND PEACEBUILDING (DIASPORA)

I. Intro
1. Name:
2. Date of birth:
3. Sex:
4. Nationality:
5. Time in The Netherlands:
6. Religion:
7. Ethnic group:

II. Motivation

1. Why did you start being active in peacebuilding activities?

2. Where do you get your inspiration from?

3. What do you think are the root causes of the conflict?

4. How can they be solved?

5. How can youth contribute to peacebuilding?

6. What is the special value of Diaspora communities in peacebuilding in their homecountry?

7. What could be difficulties for Diaspora communities in setting up peacebuilding activities in their homecountry?

8. Do you feel welcome in the Dutch society?

III. Organisation
1. Name of organisation:
2. National/regional:
3. Function in organisation:
4. In organisation since:
5. Field of action:

----

6. What activities does your organisation undertake to promote peacebuilding in your homecountry?

----

7. How do you finance your projects?

....
....

8. Give three examples of projects you participated in (project name, field of action, goals)

a. ....
....
....

b. ....
....
....

c. ....
....
....

9. What difficulties do you face in implementing your projects? (funding, cooperation etc.)

10. How do you (try to) solve them?

IV. Partnerships

1. Do you work together with other organisations/actors?
   If yes, which ones?
   _ Other Diaspora organisations in The Netherlands
   _ Other Diaspora organisations abroad, where?:
   _ Dutch NGO's, specify:
   _ Dutch government
   _ Other:

2. Do you work together with organisations or people in your homecountry? _yes _no
   If no continue with section V.

3. With which organisations or which people do you work together?

4. How do you work together?

5. Why do you work together?

6. Have you experience difficulties / obstacles in working together?
    If yes, what difficulties?

V. Education

1. Are you studying at this moment?: _yes _no
    If yes, what?:
2. What is your last completed education?

....
3. What studies/training/courses have you followed since and where?

....
....
....
....
4. Have you attended conferences? On which topic and where?

....
....
....
....
5. How do you finance your education?

....
....

VI. Contact with homecountry

1. Do you stay in touch with family? _yes _no, why not?:

    If yes, how?   How often?
    _ Telephone   _ Daily

```
_ Internet                          _ Weekly
_ Other:                            _ Monthly
                                    _ Less
```

2. Do you send money home? _ yes _ no
   If yes, how often?
   _ Weekly
   _ Monthly
   _ Less
   How much approximately per year?

3. How do you stay informed about the situation in your homecountry?
   _ Family / friends   _ Newspaper
   _ Internet   _ Television
   _ Other: _ Diaspora-community

4. How do you have access to internet?
   _ At home
   _ Work/study
   _ Internet cafes

   How many hours are you online weekly?

5. Have you been back to your country since you left it? _ yes _ no
   If yes, how often?
   For what purpose?

6. Do you want to go back to live in your homecountry in future?
   If yes, under what conditions?

   If no, why not?

   Would you be willing to go back for temporary workvisits?

Thank you for your cooperation and time!

Please return this questionnaire to me (Rozemarijn van West, 06-47440906) in person,
through the email (roosvanwest@hotmail.com) or by post:
R. van West
Himalaya 204
3524 XK Utrecht

QUESTIONNAIRE HOME COUNTRY

QUESTIONNAIRE YOUTH AND PEACEBUILDING

I. Intro
1. Name:
2. Date of birth:
3. Sex:
4. Nationality:
5. Religion:
6. Ethnic group:

II. Motivation

1. Why did you start being active in peacebuilding activities?

2. Where do you get your inspiration from?

3. What do you think are the root causes of the conflict?

4. How can they be solved?

5. How can youth contribute to peacebuilding?

6. Do you think people in the Diaspora (Africans abroad) can make a contribution to peacebuilding in their homecountries? If yes how; if no why not?

7. What could be obstacles for Diaspora people to contribute?

8. Do people from the Diaspora have advantages in contributing to peace back home?

III. Organisation you are working for
1. Name of organisation:
2. What kind of organisation:
    _ international NGO
    _ local NGO
    _ Religious organisation
    _ Traditional organisation
    _ University organisation
    _ Political organisation
    _ Other
3. Level of activities (local, national, international):
4. Region/area working in (rural/urban):
5. Function in organisation:
6. In organisation since:

7. Field of action:

....
....
....

8. What activities does your organisation undertake to promote peacebuilding?

....
....
....
....

9. How do you finance your projects?

....
....

10. Give three examples of projects you participated in (project name, field of action, goals)

a. ....
....
....

b. ....
....
....

c. ....
....
....

11. What difficulties do you face in implementing your projects? (funding, cooperation etc.)

12. How do you (try to) solve them?

IV. Partnerships

1. Do you work together with other organisations/actors?
   If yes, which ones?
   _ International NGO's
   _ Local NGO's
   _ Local government
   _ Other:

2. Do you work together with Diaspora-organisations or people in the Diaspora? _yes _no
   If no continue with section V.

3. With which Diaspora-organisations or which people do you work together?

4. How do you work together?

5. How can they help you?

6. Have you experienced difficulties / obstacles in working together?
   If yes, what difficulties?

V. Education

1. Are you studying at this moment? _yes _no
   If yes, what?

2. What is your last completed education?

....

3. What studies/training/courses have you followed since and where?

....
....
....
....

4. Have you attended conferences? On which topic and where?

---------------------------------   -----------------------------
---------------------------------   -----------------------------
---------------------------------   -----------------------------
---------------------------------   -----------------------------
5. How do you finance your education?

VI. Contacts

1. Do you have contacts abroad? _yes _no
     If yes, which ones? (family, organisations)
     How do you keep in touch with them?
     _ Telephone
     _ Internet
     _ Other

2. Do you have access to internet? _yes _no
     If yes, how?
     How many hours are you online per week?

4. Have you ever been abroad? _yes _no
     If yes, how often and where?

For what purpose?

Thank you very much for your cooperation and time!

Please return this questionnaire to me (Rozemarijn van West) in person or through the email (roosvanwest@hotmail.com).

If you want to receive the results of this research, please write down your email-address:

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT VIA EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS OF THE TRAININGCONFERENCE IN FREETOWN

Utrecht, September 2004

Dear all,

I would like to ask your help again for my research. I would like to get some more material on the problem of the lack of economic empowerment of youth, and especially about the ideas and solutions you, the youth, have about that. Could you answer the following questions for me? I will do my best to promote your own ideas and solutions through this research!

- How can the economic empowerment of youth be improved?

- Do you have ideas about practical projects aiming at creating more job-opportunities for youth? Which?

- What role can youth themselves play in their economic empowerment?

- What role could people in the Diaspora play in creating jobs in their homecountry?

Thank you very much! Rose.
roosvanwest@hotmail.com
r.h.vanwest@students.uu.nl

Appendix 5. Topics interviews

Intro
- How become involved in peacebuilding, why
- Importance home country
- Identity (ethnic, religious)
- Motivation/inspiration
- Experience of the war and role
- Is it difficult to be here?
- Do you want to go back?

Diaspora (Sierra Leone or Liberia) in The Netherlands
- How big, number of active people, role youth
- Community-sense (different then at home?)
- Dutch society, atmosphere, contact, hostility
- Relation to home country

Ideas
- Root causes of the war?
- Is the conflict solved?
- Ideas changed when in hostcountry?

Activities
- What activities are most important?
- What activities are they initiating?
- How do they execute these activities?
- How do they relate to the communities they work in?

Difficulties

- Funding (donors)
- Organisational (coordination, cooperation, facilities)
- Social (contact with home, communication/understanding, cooperation)

- Informational (information about situation at home)
- Knowledge (different ideas than in home country, additional/Western knowledge)

Added value

Youth:

- Added value (innovative, motivated, active)
- Ideas/actitivies different from older generation
- All youth, or are they exception?

Diaspora:

- Added value (networks, communication, knowledge)
- Relations with home country youth
- Why is Diaspora important?

Practical: age, sex, nationality, tribe, time in Holland

TOPICS INTERVIEWS HOME COUNTRY

Intro

- How become involved in peacebuilding, why
- Identity (ethnic, religious)
- Motivation/inspiration
- Experience of the war and role

Ideas

- Root causes of the war?
- Is the conflict solved?
- What should be changed to create a peaceful, stable society?
- How do they think that goal can be reached?

Diaspora

- Role Diaspora in peacebuilding
- Difference ideas Diaspora and home country?
- How are people from Diaspora regarded?
- Added value? (networks, communication, knowledge)
- Cooperation?
- Contact

Activities

- What activities are most important?
- What activities are they initiating?
- How do they execute these activities?
- How do they relate to the communities they work in?

Difficulties
- Funding (donors)
- Organisational (coordination, cooperation, facilities)
- Social (contact with home, communication/understanding, cooperation)
- Informational (information about situation at home)
- Knowledge

Youth
- Added value (innovative, motivated, active)
- Ideas/actitivies different from older generation
- All youth, or are they exception?

Practical: age, sex, nationality, ethnic group

Appendix 6. Information training conference

Composed of:

– Online training course: 16-29th February 2004
– Face-to-face training: 15th-27th March 2004 in Sierra Leone.

What do we aim at?

To strengthen the local capacities of youth leaders in peacebuilding and conflict transformation and provide skills and abilities to develop new partnerships and projects dealing with conflict transformation and peacebuilding in their communities, region and beyond. To offer an opportunity for learning, meeting, networking, sharing and discussing issues of major concern. It will address and strengthen the role of youth in the prevention of conflicts and further develop the African Network of Young Peacebuilders as an effective instrument for advocacy, empowerment and collective action.

Who can participate?

Active youth leaders, as members of an organization or individuals, students, teachers, journalists, living in West Africa are encouraged to apply. Personal and organisational work, a variety of organisational backgrounds, gender balance and geographical diversity will be considered as well as commitment to peacebuilding and to multiply what will be learnt.

Applicants must have a good level of English, both verbal and written, and be between 17 and 30 years old. Access to Internet is essential throughout the course. A commitment of 8-10 hours per week for the online training will be necessary. How to apply? The application instructions can be found on the UNOY website: www.unoy.org. The applicants will be asked to fill in the application form online, to include a short essay on your personal values or commitment to peace-building, your involvement as an active youth peace-builder and the lessons you have learned in that role and to include a letter of recommendation.

Project Format and Approach

Week 1-2 (16-29th February 2004)

Online Training Course where participants will be introduced to the conflict terminology; the different roles young people play in conflict; the tools enabling a better understanding of conflict and basis of intervention techniques, and a pre-course introduction on how to work in an on-line environment.

Week 3-4 (15-27th March 2004)

Face-to-Face Training and Networking Conference in Sierra Leone. The main focus will be put on developing and practicing skills on how to deal responsibly with conflicts and how to multiply what has been learnt. Practical aspects in youth work will be addressed: project management, group work, leadership, ICT, campaigning and networking. Youth will also share best practices, work in thematic groups and develop projects, promoting the Campaign. Non-verbal communication, traditional methods of conflict transformation and cultural aspects will be emphasized.

Week 5-8 Going Home

Practice of newly acquired knowledge and skills, and implementation of commitments.

Week 9 Online event

A follow up to the trainings and a longer-term evaluation of the overall project. The outcomes of this event will be published on a CD-ROM.

Cultural and Social Activities

The conference will be a joyful and creative gathering with music and colour, celebrating cultural differences within West Africa and beyond. Participants are asked to bring along, share or display the evidence of their work and their cultures: pictures, drawings, recordings, traditional clothes and dances. We also welcome materials reflecting traditional knowledge: utensils, musical instruments, songs, or stories displayed as examples of building peace and reconciliation.

Certificate

Upon a successful completion of the course participants will receive a certificate issued by The Network University and UNOY Peacebuilders. Please note that these certificates, though very valuable are not registered, and are not part of a formal education curriculum.

Trainers and Facilitators

The participants will benefit from the international team of experts in conflict transformation, online learning, facilitation, networking and youth work for the online as well as for the face to face training course.

Organisers

UNOY Peacebuilders is an international youth NGO established in 1989. It organises global, regional and local training seminars to enhance the knowledge and skills of youth working for peace, particularly focusing in (post-)conflict regions. In 2001, the UNOY Peacebuilders organised an All African training/conference in South Africa where the African Network of Young Peacebuilders (ANYP) was created. The UNOY Peacebuilders launched the Peace It Together Campaign 2003-2010, a youth campaign for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence. The Network University (TNU) is a foundation established in 1998, representing a dynamic mix between entrepreneurship and social responsibility. TNU believes in innovative approaches to education and communication in order to integrate research and practice, to generate knowledge that makes a difference in people lives and to using the best features of information and communication technologies to do this. Since 1999, TNU has been successfully developing online educational activities in the field of conflict transformation and earned recognition and awards. This project is an integral part of TNU online capacity building programme on conflict transformation and post conflict development.

UNOY Sierra Leone. UNOY Sierra Network, established in 1992. In 2002 UNOY SL Network organised the first post conflict nation wide gathering of 70 youth leaders. The conference was conducted in the perspective of reconciliation, leadership and NGO/project management and as a contribution to the Int. Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010).

West African Youth Network. West African Youth Network is based in Liberia and was established in 2001. It seeks as an advocacy mechanism and Public Policy Voice for the cause of young people in West Africa and empowers them to get involved in practical projects geared toward peace-building, human rights, conflict resolution, good governance and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Partners
- African Network of Young Peacebuilders
- All-Africa Students Union
- Dutch National Youth Council
- Students' Forum 2000 Initiative

Projects' Essentials

Project Dates

- Online training course: 16-29th February 2004
- Face-to-face training: 15th-27th March 2004
- On-line follow up event: to be confirmed

Venue

The first phase will take place online. The face-to-face conference will be in the National Stadium Hostels in Freetown/ or the National Pastoral and Social Centre in Kenema, Sierra Leone (yet to be decided).

Duration

The program will last for 9 weeks.

Financial Matters

Registration fee is US$100, which will be fully reimbursed upon the completion of the course. No course fees or accommodation costs will be charged from the selected participants. The organizers are in the process of raising travel grants for those in need.

Scholarships

Efforts are made to secure scholarships. However, no promises can be made at this stage. We urge every one to try to raise your own travel cost.

Contact for the Applicants

For more information, application forms and online registration please visit the website of UNOY or contact us at the address below. Application forms can be downloaded from the website and must be sent online by the 20th January 2004.

Address: UNOY Peacebuilders, Venediën 25; 1441 AK Purmerend, the Netherlands Tel.: +31 299-436093; Fax: +31 299-427126 E-mail: info@unoy.org; Web: www.unoy.org