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Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora

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Capacity Building for Peace and Development:
The Afghan Diaspora in Toronto

Community Based Participatory Action Research Project

October 2006

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For the University for Peace

Discussion Paper for the Expert Forum on *"Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora"* in Toronto, October 19-20, 2006.

University for Peace

DIASPORA 2006 CONFERENCE
Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of the Diaspora
October 19-20, 2006
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Highlights

Research Objective:

The primary research objective was to identify the opportunities and challenges that support and impede the engagement of members of the Afghan diaspora in peace building and development in Afghanistan and in Canada.

Methodology:

A total of 261 Afghan-Canadians living in the Greater Toronto Area completed questionnaires that asked ten questions about Afghan-Canadian relations with Afghanistan (including contributions and barriers to peace building and development), and two questions about relations within the Afghan-Canadian community.

The sample consisted of 83 'newcomers' who had been in Canada five years or less, 95 'old-comers' who had been in Canada more than 5 years, and 83 'youth' (ages 16-25).

Main Findings:

The major themes to emerge from the questionnaires include:

- *A focus on underlying causes: dynamics of conflict and 'roots' of peace*
- *An overall willingness to engage in peace building and development*
- *Differential capacities / roles re: contributing*
- *A complex relationship with the 'host' country*
    - ¬ *Canadian values: positive and negative influences*
    - ¬ *Engaging the diaspora: overcoming barriers, creating opportunities*
- *Challenges and opportunities within the Afghan-Canadian community*
    - ¬ *Adapting to life in Canada*
    - ¬ *Need to connect and unite*
    - ¬ *Tradition of non-violent dispute settlement*
- *Other issues of interest:*
    - ¬ *Notable differences between 'target' groups*
    - ¬ *Internet as a new key to building networks*

Suggestions for future research and recommendations re: capacity building and policy are offered.

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Section 1. Introduction

Brief overview of 'Diaspora' and contributions to countries of origin

The term diaspora comes from the Greek diaspeirein, meaning "dispersal or scattering of seeds." Today, it is commonly used to describe trans-national communities of refugees and immigrants living outside of their countries of origin, most often due to forced displacement. Members of a diaspora generally continue to relate emotionally to their 'homeland' and to maintain a sense of 'ethno-national consciousness,' while also reshaping their identity to adapt to a new society/context. To varying degrees and via diverse mechanisms, members may choose to be involved in activities of preservation or reconstruction of their country of origin.

Diasporas may contribute financially or materially – for example, through remittances sent 'home' to family and friends. This tends to add more to individual well being than to national development, and in fact may worsen polarized tensions, as the 'poorest of the poor' are the least likely to have links to diaspora communities. Diaspora members may also choose to channel funds or needed goods to NGOs, either through organizations based in the country of residence or through those working on the ground in the country of origin, thus supporting development directly. A third form of material support can involve investment or business creation.

Diasporas may also contribute intellectually and socially through capacity building and strengthening civil societies. This may include, for example, knowledge transfer of expertise (IT, English language, professional skills and experience, etc.), and/or social transfer of new ideas and values garnered from the country of residence. These knowledge and social exchanges may be 'mediated', perhaps via the Internet, international forums, research reports, articles, etc. or they may be done through direct presence, via permanent return or temporary 'circulation of human capital'.

Yet another potential way for members of a diaspora to contribute to their country of origin is through political advocacy and lobbying, of governments (that of the country of residence and/or of the 'homeland'). If effectively organized, diaspora networks can have a

voice in foreign policy and development initiative planning and implementation, including issues of cultural appropriateness.

Finally, it should be noted that, in a tangential manner, contributions are also made through efforts to build unity of purpose and vision within diaspora communities, to maintain cultural and social links between members of the diaspora and the country of origin, and to assist newcomers in settling into life in the country of residence such that they can build the social and economic resources they will need to be effective contributors to peace and development.

(Sources: Westcott 2006; Brinkerhoff 2004; Hairdari 2004; Nassery 2003; Meyers 2001; Cohen 1997; Safran 1991.)

The Afghan Diaspora & a synopsis of the recent history of Afghanistan[1]

Diasporas are not identical, nor monolithic – as such, it is important to understand the specific social, political, and historical context(s) from which a diaspora community has emerged. Since officially gaining independence in 1919, Afghanistan has experienced a tumultuous path, culminating in the last three decades of foreign 'interference' and internal conflict. Indeed, Afghan history is much more complex than existing media formulations of pre- and post-Taliban.

Afghanistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia, about the size of Manitoba, divided into 34 provinces. It is bordered by Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikstan, and China – and is considered to have strategic regional significance. About 80% of the population live in rural areas, although only 12% of the land is arable. It is an ethnically diverse country where an estimated 30 languages are spoken; the two official ones are Pashto and Dari. Religion is an important binding factor in the country as almost 99% of Afghans are Muslim.

Between 1919 and the 1970s, Afghanistan was a constitutional monarchy that went through cycles of socio-economic reform and resistance to reform. In 1978 the Peoples' Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) came to power through a bloody coup, assisted by

the former USSR. When their attempts to introduce Marxist reforms were opposed, they called on the Soviet Union for assistance. The Soviets invaded with 120,000 soldiers, igniting a war of resistance that lead to upwards of 6 million Afghans (approximately one fifth of the population) leaving the country as refugees. It is estimated that over one million Afghans were killed before the Soviets withdrew in 1989.

While the majority fled to Pakistan or Iran, a much smaller group of middle-class, educated Afghans made it to Europe or North America. Many had been exposed previously to Western ideas and fled the region due to persecution by the Marxists within Afghanistan and by the Islamic fundamentalists in the refugee community in Pakistan.

After the Soviets left, the political situation in Afghanistan remained volatile. Neighbouring countries tried to push their interests in Afghanistan. The various resistance Mujaheddin groups turned from battling Soviet troops to fighting each other. A second wave of refugees to the West took place from 1992-1996 as civil war engulfed the country.

After the Taliban (literally 'religious students') took the capital city of Kabul in 1996, a third wave of refugees arose. The Taliban imposed rigid, punitive laws based on their strict, interpretation of the *shari'a*. After turning a blind eye for several years, the UN began implementing sanctions, further isolating the country. After the events of September 11th, 2001, the United States launched their 'war against terrorism' and through a bombing campaign and weapons provision to the opposition 'Northern Alliance', the Taliban were 'defeated' in December 2001. Those Afghans who made it to the West during this wave tended to be, again, from the urban educated middle-class, along with a group of less educated. Overall, an estimated 90 percent of the educated population left the country during these waves of exodus.

(Sources: Library of Congress 2006; BBC News 2006; Braakman 2005; MSF 2002; Malley 2002)

[1] See Appendix A for a map of Afghanistan and a table of key statistics; see Appendix B for a more detailed chronology of recent historical events

The Afghan diaspora in Canada

The Afghan diaspora based in Western countries is estimated to number 800,000, with the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany having the largest communities. There were over 25,000 Afghans in Canada as reported in the 2001 Census, with almost 14,000 living in Toronto, and slightly fewer than 3,000 in both Montreal and Vancouver. Every year an estimated 1000 new Afghan immigrants arrive in Toronto alone (excluding refugees) as government sponsored, privately sponsored, and family class immigrants. It will be interesting to see what the 2006 Census reveals, as some estimates for the population are as high as 55,000.

The Diaspora, Islam and Gender Project based at York University used 2001 Census data to generate a statistical profile of the Afghan community in Canada. They noted the following interesting trends:

1) The largest influx of immigrants was in 1996-2001, with over 42% (10,700 people) of the Afghan population coming to Canada during those years.

2) The community is young, with the majority of its population aged between 15 and 44. There are more males than females, and in particular, there are more males than females in the 0-14 and 45-64 age groups.

3) The community is highly mobile, and this mobility includes both internal and external moves. This trend suggests both the continuous flow of migration as well as the settlement instability of the "movers" in their adopted country.

4) About 57 percent of Afghans have acquired Canadian citizenship.

5) The Afghan community has relatively lower levels of post-secondary education, when compared nationally and to Muslims in Canada. Women are less educated than males at the university level.

6) In terms of income, Afghans derive their income mostly from employment. There is also, however, a fair amount of reliance on government transfers. Over 61 percent of Afghans live below the low-income cut-offs for Canada.

(Sources: DIG 2005; SAFE 2003; CIC)

It is unclear exactly how many Afghan-Canadian organizations presently exist. Common types of diaspora nonprofits found in Western nations include: professional associations, settlement organizations, cultural foundations and language schools, religious organizations, student associations, development and humanitarian relief organizations, or some combination of these. Their primary focus may be on Afghanistan, on Canada, or both. They may or may not work in collaboration with other Afghan and/or Canadian organizations.

Women and youth tend to be on the forefront of organized diaspora activities. The urban and literate women of the diaspora started forming women's NGOs in their new countries of residence, establishing women as important civil society actors. Women tend to be less divided on ethnic and political lines; they remain more focused on issues of human rights. As the number of educated Afghan youth increases, youth are emerging as the most active and vocal group of the diaspora. They also seem to be the least divided by factional 'baggage' and the most skilled in conflict resolution.

Internationally, it should be noted that prominent members of the Afghan diaspora were well represented in the recent state-building process, including the Bonn Agreement of December 2001, the Tokyo Reconstruction Conference in January 2002, the Constitutional Loya Jirga in December 2003, and the National Elections in September 2004. Indeed, President Hamid Karzai is a US national. Many cabinet ministers in the current government, and many UN and NGO officials are from the diaspora. Some people within Afghanistan have expressed resentment towards the amount of attention and power the diaspora has been given.
(Sources: Karimi 2006; Kerlin 2006; Westcott 2006; Kandiyoti 2005; Norquay 2004)

Snapshot: Current situation in Afghanistan

The process of reconstruction has been conceptualized as multi-faceted, entailing a *political* transition to a legitimate and effective state, a *security* transition to peace and stability, and *a socio-economic* transition to sustainable economic growth. Looking at the current picture it is difficult to consider Afghanistan as in a 'post-conflict' reconstruction phase. The associated costs of the continuing conflict on the lives of ordinary people continue to escalate.

Politically, Afghanistan has a new state structure built on presidential democracy and supported by a bicameral national assembly (comprising a Lower House, *Wolesi Jirga*, and an Upper House, *Meshrano Jirga*) where the political representation of women has been enshrined in law. However there is concern about the current government officials, with some having apparent warlord and drug connections, or being seen as basically corrupt.

The Afghan state also faces strong international 'influences' from countries such as Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the former Soviet Union, the nations of Europe, and the United States. The Taliban continue to receive support from the government of Pakistan. There have been concerns raised that the Afghan state answers more to the international community than to the Afghan people. The Bush administration has been criticized for not pushing Pakistan to stop its support of the Taliban. President Karzai has just called for a Loya Jirga with Pakistan to discuss that very issue.

In terms of security, military expenditure outpaces development and reconstruction spending by 900%. NATO has just taken over the US forces operating in the east, making this the largest ever NATO ground combat operation with over 32,000 soldiers. Some 8,000 U.S. troops will continue to function outside NATO, tracking al-Qaida terrorists and training Afghan security forces. Nevertheless, the levels of violence, especially in the southern parts of the country, are escalating. The lives of prominent 'peace builders' also remain insecure, as illustrated by the September killing by gunman in Kandahar of the provincial director of the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Socio-economically, the situation in Afghanistan is alarming as a brief snapshot reveals:

- Human development indicators such as maternal mortality rates, illiteracy rates, life expectancy and per capita income are among the worst in the world.

- Despite constitutional equality, women's rights are far from guaranteed: "Violence against women is pervasive; it includes forced marriage, child marriage, trafficking, immolation and physical violence. Inheritance and property laws leave widows or divorced women vulnerable. Discriminatory provisions in laws and policies are still prevalent and have not been made consistent with the constitution" (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2006)

- Low agricultural production, caused by numerous factors including drought and displacement, are contributing to food shortages and hunger. International contributions to food assistance programs are falling short of the need.

- There is limited access to clean water and sanitation. There is little in the way of health care infrastructure. One in five children die before they reach their fifth birthday.

- While number of schools and enrolment did increase significantly shortly after the Taliban were removed from power, the educational situation has been deteriorating again. About 200,000 Afghan children were forced out of school in 2006 by threats and physical attacks. Adult literacy rates are estimated at below 50% for men and below 15% for women, with a rate as low as 1% in some districts.

- Internal displacement is also a recurring issue, with increased fighting among NATO troops and insurgents in southern and eastern Afghanistan leading to nearly 15,000 displaced families in the Kandahar area alone over the past few months.

- At less than 5% of GDP, Afghanistan's domestic revenue collection is one of the lowest in the world. Yet less than half of the $15 billion promised in international aid has been delivered. The larger regional centres, especially Kabul, benefit from unequal economic and political reconstruction, causing resentment. More needs to be done to transition people into sustainable livelihoods, especially poppy farmers.

(Sources: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2006; UN WFP 2006; SENLIS 2006; Rashid 2006; Constable 2006; Abrashi 2006; Kandiyoti 2005; UNDP 2004; Zunzer 2004)

Snapshot: Role of Canadian Government

According to the website for CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), Canada is taking a 'whole of government' approach towards development in Afghanistan. Since 2002, Afghanistan has been the single largest recipient of Canadian bilateral aid. Canada's total allocation of development assistance to Afghanistan over the 2001 to 2011 period is almost $1 billion. Program activities include disarming and demobilizing former combatants and providing micro-financing support to low-income people, especially women. Also of interest, CIDA introduced its new Voluntary Sector Fund in June of this year to support joint development efforts between Canadian NGOs and groups in other countries. CIDA has highlighted the fact that "new partners such as diaspora groups and professional associations will now be eligible for funding."

CIDA has been publicly criticized recently in terms of lack of transparency and accountability for failing to provide evidence of where exactly their contributions to Afghanistan are going or how program effectiveness is being evaluated.

The Canadian Forces currently have 2,300 troops stationed in Afghanistan, the majority in the southern province of Kandahar, as part of the NATO contingency. Canada has extended the mandate of its Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kandahar from 2007 to 2009. The PRT is a small, joint civilian-military group whose mission is to promote local stability and security, improve local governance structures, and engage in reconstruction activities. The PRTs have been the source of some controversy, as military involvement in development has been criticized by relief agencies who claim that it puts them at risk by blurring the distinction between combatants and humanitarian workers.

(Sources: CIDA webpage; Campion-Smith 2006; Canadian Forces 2006; Zunzer 2004; MSF 2002)

Snapshot: Peace building and development initiatives in Afghanistan

The AiDa (Accessible Information on Development Activities) list on the Development Gateway website lists 1,103 ongoing programs related to development and security in Afghanistan, sponsored by governments and NGOs from countries around the world. The Directory of Development Organizations 2006 outlines over 90 development organizations based in Afghanistan. The directory also lists 9 categories that such organizations may fall into: international organizations, government institutions, private sector support organizations, finance institutions, training and research centres, civil society organizations (including local NGOs, trade unions, faith organizations, etc.), development consulting firms, information providers, and grantmakers

In regards to programs directly targeting the Afghan diaspora, perhaps the best known is the IOM (International Organization for Migration) Return of Qualified Afghans Program. The IOM recruits members of the diaspora from every field – from English-speaking, technologically savvy administrative assistants, to professors, engineers, and civil servants - to work with the Afghan government by 'importing knowledge' that is currently unavailable domestically. Recruits are paid a local wage, along with an IOM supplement. Contracts range from three months to potentially permanent. Some Afghan-Canadians have participated in this program, and IOM have a database of more than 5,000 Afghan professionals living abroad.

(Sources: Development Gateway website; Directory of Development Organizations 2006; IOM 2005)

Section 2. Present Study

Overview

The present study is part of a larger research project, spearheaded by the University for Peace (UPEACE) in Toronto, the purpose of which is to initiate participatory action research in partnership with Canadian diaspora communities to identify the challenges and opportunities that support and impede their engagement in peace building and development

The intent of this paper is to ground this understanding of challenges and opportunities in the particular lived realities of members of the Afghan diaspora living in the Greater Toronto Area. The Afghan Women's Organization (AWO), a non-profit organization that promotes the successful settlement of Afghan refugees in Canada and also assists vulnerable Afghans in refugee camps and in Afghanistan, was selected as the project partner responsible for coordinating logistics and collecting data from this group. (For more information on UPEACE and AWO, please see Appendix C.)

This paper will, among other things, serve as a discussion paper at the UPEACE Expert Forum on "Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora" in Toronto, October 19-20, 2006. The aim of this research project and the forum is to catalyze a more systematic look at capacity building and policy needs related to harnessing diversity as an asset by tapping into the creativity, energy, and resources of diaspora communities.

Methodology

Settlement staff at the Afghan Women's Organization provided the project coordinator for this study with a list of about 500 clients and 'friends' of the organization as well as other organizations in Toronto. People from this list were called by the facilitators and invited to participate. Others learned of the study through word of mouth (e.g., friends and relatives of people originally contacted, acquaintances of staff members, etc.).

Generally, 10 to 20 people would come together at one time. The 'facilitator' would give a brief explanation of the research project and hand out a waiver for the participants to sign. The 12-question questionnaires, asking about personal contributions to peace building and development, perceived barriers, key conditions and connections, etc., were then filled out individually. (See Appendix D for copy of the waiver and questionnaire; the questions were

originally provided by UPEACE, and then slightly altered by AWO; the questionnaires were in English and Dari – approximately 30% of participants answered in English, the remaining questionnaire responses were translated into English by an AWO staff member.) It took an average 30 minutes for everyone to complete the questionnaires.

Following this, there was time allotted for group discussion of the issues raised. The amount of discussion varied from session to session. Notes were taken at some but not all sessions. As the content of the notes reflected the same ideas as those captured in the questionnaires, only the questionnaire responses were considered in the analysis. At the end of the session people were paid a $20 honorarium as a thank you for their time.

All together there were 17 group sessions held at 5 different locations across the GTA at various times of day, in August and September 2006. Child-minding services were available for participants but were rarely used. The facilitators were Afghan-Canadians, and included a female AWO settlement worker, a female AWO youth worker, and a male who works in media.

Three 'target' groups were considered: 'youth' (ages 16-25), 'newcomer' adult (< 5 years in Canada), and 'old-comer' adult (> 5 years in Canada). Four of the sessions were youth only, while the other sessions were mixed groups and mixed gender, although a few sessions turned out by chance to be women-only. Facilitators circulated the room and put a symbol to mark the appropriate group on each person's questionnaire. The facilitators were familiar with many of the participants and so knew which group they fit into; when they did not know they asked. The questionnaires were anonymous and no other demographic information was collected.

It is assumed, given the confidential nature of the questionnaire and the general familiarity with the facilitators, that respondents felt comfortable and able to answer honestly. Many people thanked the facilitators and the project coordinator after the session for the opportunity to participate and share their ideas on this subject.

A total of 256 questionnaires were completed during these sessions. An additional 5 questionnaires were completed and returned via electronic mail by individuals unable to attend any of the sessions but still interested in taking part.

Results

Questionnaires were completed by a total of 261 people. As mentioned above, this sample was divided into three groups for analysis, with 83 'newcomers' (< 5 yrs in Canada), 95 'old-comers' (> 5 yrs in Canada), and 83 'youth' (16 - 25 years of age) participating.

The first question asked: ***Have you made any contribution towards building peace and helping development work in Canada or in Afghanistan?***

- Overall, 40% of participants said they have not yet contributed towards building peace and helping development work, but indicated that they would like to in the future. Forty-three percent of youth, 42% of newcomers, and 35% of old-comers answered in this way.
- Just below one-third of respondents have contributed somewhat towards peace building and development, most commonly through volunteer work or donating money. Youth are most likely to have raised funds or donated to a cause. Old-comers are most likely to have encouraged / talked about peace with family, friends or through the media. They were the least likely of the three groups to name working with youth or children as their contribution.
- Just over one in ten of the participants have contributed extensively to peace building or development. They have done this through in-depth participation in organizations in Canada and/or in Afghanistan, through multiple significant involvements, or through high-level contributions to the Afghan state and/or in rebuilding infrastructure in Afghanistan. Notably, 22% of old-comers have contributed extensively, in comparison to around 8% each of newcomers and youth.
- Sixteen percent of people reported that they had not contributed to peace building and development, and did not indicate an intention to do so. Most commonly, they explained that they did not know how to contribute or they faced barriers, such as being a newcomer. Such a response was given by 22% of newcomers, 16% of old-comers, and slightly less than 10% of youth.
- Only 1.5% (all youth) did not answer this question.

Table 1. Contributions made towards peace building and development.

RESPONSES	**TOTAL**	Newcomer	Old-comer	Youth
YES (somewhat)	**77**	22	26	29
Volunteering, going to meetings / workshops / gatherings	20	7	6	7
Fundraising / donating to charity	20	4	5	11
Encouraging / talking about peace (w/ family, friends, through media)	18	3	12	3
Teaching children, Youth working with other youth	12	6	1	5
Yes, no elaboration	7	2	2	3
YES (extensively)	**34**	7	21	6
High involvement in Afghan orgs in Afghanistan & Canada	14	3	10	1
Multiple, in-depth involvements	11	1	6	4
Re: Afghan state, rebuilding infrastructure	9	3	5	1
NOT YET, but would like to in future	**104**	35	33	36
NO, don't know how, am newcomer, etc	**42**	19	15	8
No answer provided	***4***	*0*	*0*	*4*

Table 2. Examples of categorized responses to Question 1.

YES, somewhat	NC	Yes, as a teacher I always encourage students towards peace.
	OC	Yes, I have always supported peace efforts and encouraged families and relatives back in Afghanistan to peace.
	Y	Yes, I have volunteered in my school in fundraising for children.
YES, extensively	NC	Yes, I was a delegate to both grand assemblies held for peace and security in Afghanistan and also I was an observer in the presidential election in Afghanistan.
	OC	…I was able to rebuild a school that was destroyed. The number of students is about 2000. We still contribute in sending educational materials to this school. …[W]ith the help of my friends I have opened a cultural centre for Afghans in Canada. In addition to this we also publish a newspaper containing many articles regarding problems in Afghanistan and ways to help.
	Y	Yes, organizing social programs on both small and large scale to bring youth together and make them aware about issues back home and thus encouraging them to contribute towards peace building. Participating in forums, conferences, focus groups, & studies focusing on peace building. Making financial contributions towards rebuilding. Outreach on behalf of homeland and university and schools.
NO, but would like to in future	NC	Due to lack of necessary means and the existence of some barriers, I have not been able to make any contribution yet, even though I have the capacity in the area of development. But I am willing to contribute in the future.
	OC	No, I haven't and the reason is not that I am not interested but I am not really sure how I can help. If there were awareness workshops helping Afghans learn how they can contribute to building peace, then I am sure everyone will participate
	Y	No, due to lack of connections or an opportunity, but I am willing to contribute.
NO	NC	No, just came to this country. No experience of any kind of work yet.
	OC	No, I don't think it's feasible on an individual basis.
	Y	No, youth have not been given an opportunity and I don't know how to help.

The second question asked: ***Do you have any peace building lessons that can be shared regarding what works as well as what doesn't work regarding the facilitation of peace building?*** With this question, and many of the subsequent ones, respondents gave 'multiple' answers that got tallied into multiple categories, thus percentages will not add up to 100.[2]

- The most common 'peace building lesson' shared was to promote ethno-linguistic, religious, and political unity (including negotiating between opposition groups to stop the war). This category of response, given by 21% of individuals, was more or less equally common across the three groups.
- This was closely followed by promotion of economic development (more effective, culturally respectful, focused on building local capacity). This category of response was given by 19% of people, and was the most common answer among old-comers.
- Improving education (including literacy & job training) and general infrastructure was the next most common response category, provided by 16% of participants. This was the most common idea given by newcomers.
- Diaspora involvement & empowerment came next (including building links between diaspora, governments, and NGOs). Thirteen percent of respondents gave answers that fit in this category. It was the most common answer given by youth.
- The disarming and removal of warlords was suggested by 11.5% of participants, while stopping the interference of neighbouring countries (especially Pakistan) was mentioned by 10%. Additional responses included dealing with corruption within and strengthening the Afghan government (said by 8% of respondents), promoting civil societies and/or women's rights (5%), and strengthening the police and judiciary within Afghanistan (just under 4% of people).
- The 'Other' category included the following answers: promote peaceful Islam, eradicate poppy cultivation, the USA can bring peace, Afghan media should promote peace, foreign troops should minimize civilian losses, understanding of the Afghan situation should be promoted in Canada through public speakers
- Finally, 16% of respondents failed to provide an answer or indicated that they did not know / had no idea (including almost 22% of youth).

[2] People rarely mentioned what does not work; where they did the 'mirror' of the response was categorized.

Table 3. **What works regarding the facilitation of peace building?**

RESPONSES	**TOTAL**	Newcomer	Old-comer	Youth
Promote ethno-linguistic / religious / political unity	**55**	18	18	19
Economic development (more & better, culturally sensitive, build local capacity)	**50**	15	25	10
Education (schools, literacy, training), infrastructure	**42**	21	11	10
Diaspora involvement & empowerment by orgs & govt (including youth)	**35**	3	10	22
Disarming & removing warlords	**30**	13	10	7
Stop interference by neighbours	**27**	11	13	3
Strengthen Afghan government, deal with corruption, build trust	**21**	8	11	2
Promote civil societies, women's rights	**13**	4	7	2
Strengthen law enforcement/judiciary	**10**	4	5	1
Other	**9**	1	8	0
Don't know / No Answer	***42***	*10*	*14*	*18*

Table 4. **Examples of responses to Question 2.**

NC	-'Tangible' economic development that directly affects ordinary citizens' lives in the war torn country - Improving education and expanding educational institutions - Supporting the burgeoning civil societies, which are very weak to non-existent, in order to serve the society and off-load govt responsibilities to some extent. - Empowering the diaspora through targeted training and education / providing it with financial and technical resources (by Canadian govt). Canadian govt should involve the diaspora in its peace building and development programs. The diaspora, a potential element, feels marginalized and neglected. - Trust building to achieve peace building. Thirty years of war has damaged trust in govt and other social entities. The trust needs to be regained. - Helping the Afghan govt to streamline its institutions, in particular, law enforcement and judicial systems. - Pressuring the neighbouring countries to stop interference in Afghanistan's affairs.
OC	- Targeted/specialized training and education should be provided to Afghans in the diaspora in order to prepare them for peace building and development tasks in Afghanistan. There should be organizations here to connect the diaspora to Afghanistan and serve as a link. - There should be a focus on women's rights and issues.
Y	- Education is the best tool in bringing long-term peace: more schools in Afghanistan

The third question had two parts: ***a) What are the key conditions that appear to help the diaspora to engage in peacebuilding and development, both in the country of origin (Afghanistan) and the new homeland (Canada)? (For example, political, economic, social, institutional, historical, and cultural factors),*** and ***b) What are the barriers?***

Which context (Afghanistan or Canada) respondents were referring to was often not clear. Many gave general answers such as "economic factors are the key conditions for peace and development." Thus, answers were coded more generally, but some examples will be given to clarify matters as they relate to country of origin or country of residence.

Key conditions:

- About 27% of people mentioned economic conditions as key to engaging in peace building. This response was given more or less equally across groups, and was the most popular response for all groups (tied with institutional / organizational conditions for old-comers). Economic conditions included economic development within Afghanistan and the personal economic situation of members of the diaspora.
- Social conditions - for example, a need for establishment into Canadian society, and unity within the diaspora - were reported as key by just over one-fifth of respondents. A similar percentage mentioned institutional and organizational conditions. Examples include establishing civil society organizations in the diaspora and inside Afghanistan, and recruitment programs of educated, skilled Afghan-Canadians by governments. Both categories of answers were comparatively more common among old-comers (25%).
- Just below 18% reported that political conditions were important, especially minimizing interference by neighbouring countries and creating political stability in Afghanistan. This was a comparatively less common answer for youth (13%).
- Also less common among youth were historic & cultural conditions (mentioned by about 7% of respondents) – for example, "an understanding of the people, terrain, and culture of Afghanistan" (OC).
- About 11% gave no answer or said they did not know (including 17% of youth).

Table 5. Key conditions for diaspora engagement in peace building and development

RESPONSES	**TOTAL**	Newcomer	Old-comer	Youth
Economic	**70**	25	24	21
Social	**56**	16	23	17
Institutional/Organizational	**55**	17	24	14
Political	**46**	17	18	11
Historic/Cultural	**18**	9	6	3
All of the above	**7**	4	2	1
Don't know / No Answer	***30***	*9*	*7*	*14*

Table 6. Barriers to diaspora engagement in peace building and development

RESPONSES	**TOTAL**	Newcomer	Old-comer	Youth
Lack of economic resources within the diaspora	**68**	22	26	20
Lack of institutional/organizational support for diaspora	**65**	19	29	17
Lack of education/literacy/ESL-proficiency	**40**	16	20	4
Other countries' interests/ interference	**27**	14	10	3
Lack of security / ongoing war	**20**	10	6	4
Lack of unity within diaspora	**19**	6	11	2
Lack of engaging youth & women	**11**	0	3	8
Lack of time	**10**	3	1	6
Corruption in Afghan govn't	**8**	2	5	1
Low level of economic dev't in Afghanistan	**6**	2	0	4
Lack of independent press in Afghanistan	**1**	1	0	0
NO BARRIERS EXIST	**4**	2	1	1
Don't know / No Answer	***34***	*11*	*6*	*17*

Barriers:

- The lack of economic resources within the diaspora is the most common barrier to engaging in peace building and development, cited by 26% of participants. This was more or less equally mentioned among the three groups and was the most common answer given by newcomers and youth.
- A similar percentage noted the lack of institutional / organizational support for the Afghan diaspora, including from the Canadian government. This answer was

comparatively more popular among old-comers than newcomers or youth, and was the most common response given by that group.

- Fifteen percent of respondents said that lack of education, literacy, and English-proficiency was a barrier. This barrier was, comparatively, noted much less commonly by youth.
- One in ten people reported that other countries' interests and interference is a barrier to peace building and development, another answer less common among youth, as were lack of security / the ongoing war (8% of respondents), and lack of unity within the diaspora (7% overall).
- Only 4% of all respondents see the lack of engaging youth and women in peace building and development as a barrier, but almost one in ten youth do.
- Other perceived barriers include: lack of time (noted by 10 people, including 6 youth), corruption in the Afghan government (8), the low level of economic development within Afghanistan (6), and the lack of independent Afghan press (1)
- Four individuals thought that no barriers exist, while 13% of people did not provide an answer or indicated that they did not know (including just over 20% of youth).

Table 7. Examples of responses to Question 3

NC	a) Economic, social and political factors are intertwined and all are important; b) economic barriers – the diaspora cannot afford to engage in such activities, and political barriers – the presence of warlords in the Afghan government is discouraging
OC	a) Institutional / organizational b) Political differences in the diaspora; lack of proper education; lack of effective links to Afghanistan (diaspora feels effectively disconnected with Afghanistan)
Y	a) Social and cultural: getting more integrated into the Canadian society in order to learn their values as well as share our own cultural values; b) lack of freedom for Afghan women to take part in peace building and development activities

The fourth question asked: ***Do the socio-political values of host countries (Canada) affect the ways in which diaspora communities engage in peace and development initiatives 'back home'?***

- Eighty-five percent of respondents believe that the socio-political values of Canada do affect the ways in which diaspora communities engage in peace building and development initiatives.
- About 40% of those who answered in the affirmative did not elaborate (36% of all participants, including 43% of youth). The rest of those who said yes offered one or more specific influences.
- Positive influences included Canada's multicultural values & tolerance of diversity (mentioned by 17% overall, including 23% of youth, 17% of newcomers, but only 11.5% of old-comers), Canada's democratic values & freedoms (mentioned by 15% overall, but only 7% of youth), access to Canadian education & training programs (just over 8%), and cooperation / aid from the Canadian government (3.5% overall, mentioned almost exclusively by old-comers).
- Negative influences named were: the non-constructive nature of Canadian foreign policy (5%), Canadian profiling of Muslims (3.5%), and the lack of diaspora engagement by the Canadian government (3%).
- Seventeen people, or 6.5% of respondents, believed the values of Canada do not affect diaspora communities. Fewer than half of these gave a general 'no', while more than half said Afghan & Canadian cultures were too different to influence each other.
- Almost 9% did not provide an answer or indicated that they did not know.

Table 8. Whether socio-political values of Canada affect how the Afghan diaspora engage in peace building and development

RESPONSES	**TOTAL**	Newcomer	Long-term	Youth
YES, no elaboration	**95**	28	31	36
+POS, Cdn multicultural values & tolerance	**44**	14	11	19
+POS, Cdn democratic values & freedoms	**39**	15	18	6
+POS, Cdn education & training	**22**	8	7	7
+POS, Cdn govn't cooperation, aid	**9**	1	8	0
-NEG, Cdn foreign policy not constructive	**13**	4	8	1
-NEG, Cdn profiling of Muslims	**9**	3	3	3
-NEG, diaspora not engaged by Cdn govt	**8**	1	6	1
NO, no elaboration	**7**	3	0	4
NO, Afghan & Cdn cultures too different	**10**	1	4	5
Don't know / No Answer	***22***	*7*	*9*	*6*

Table 9. Examples of responses to Question 4

NC	People have realized that multi-ethnicity is actually a beauty rather than a reason for conflict. Mesmerized by the harmony prevailing in Canada, they want to see this applied to Afghanistan, thus get involved.
OC	Freedom of expression and freedom of practicing religion are great socio-democratic values of Canada that shape the way diaspora engages in peacebuilding and development in terms of expanding Afghans' scope of activities.
Y	Current profiling of Muslims and Muslim communities and the stereotyping in the media here in Canada frightens Afghans and impedes their activities. People are afraid of being associated with terrorism due to their religious or cultural background.

The fifth question asked participants to: ***Identify traditional stories of conflict resolution and peace building from your homeland.***

- Forty-three percent provided no answer or indicated that they did not know a traditional story of peace building. There was large range among groups, with 58% of youth, 45% of newcomers, and just 28% of old-comers not able to provide a story.
- Almost one in five respondents mentioned the Loya Jerga or inter-tribal / inter-ethnic Grand Council that comes together to solve national problems. Almost 30% of old-comers but only 6% of youth answered in this way.

- Just slightly fewer people overall noted the tradition of elders within a community solving conflicts or making decisions (including, in this case, 31% of youth):
- Just over 10% of people mentioned a story with a clear theme of unity (only 5% of youth). These stories included, most commonly, one about how a bunch of sticks together is harder to break than a single stick.
- Other 'unity' stories included: one about a huge red turnip that could only be pulled out of the ground by a group of people working together; one about not being able to tell the difference between blood from a Muslim and from a Hindu; one about a girl and boy from different tribes falling in love and bringing peace between their groups; and one about an elder brother sharing the family's farm crop equally with his younger brother in order to keep peace and avoid future conflict.
- Another 5% noted the story of Rostam and Sohrab, an ancient Persian tale about a father killing his son in the heat of battle without realizing what he was doing
- Three individuals mentioned a popular saying along the lines of "one should ignore little mistakes."
- Two other stories included one about how women play a key role in bringing peace: an old lady came to a conflict and threw her veil down and asked them stop. Throwing a veil is now a symbol of peace in those areas. Another person mentioned how Islamic teachings about solving conflict between opponent groups are commonly used.

Table 10. Traditional stories of peace building and conflict

RESPONSES	**TOTAL**	Newcomer	Long-term	Youth
Loya Jerga (Grand council)	**51**	18	28	5
Elders (more generally)	**49**	10	14	25
Stories of 'unity'	**30**	10	16	4
Rostam & Sohrab (ancient Persian tale)	**14**	6	7	1
Popular Saying	**3**	1	2	0
Other	**2**	1	1	0
Don't know / No Answer	**112**	37	27	48

Table 9. Examples of specific responses to question 5.

Loya Jerga	During Ahmad Shah Baba who was in control of Afghanistan a Loya Jerga (grand council) was organized. This was consisted of representatives from all tribes and ethnic groups. Historically, it has been used to settle inter-tribal disputes, discuss social reforms and approve a new constitution and resolve other national problems. It is also called a traditional meeting of elders of all tribes to solve some big problems. Even now, they do this for peace making among people in Afghanistan. (OC)
Elders	Elders usually solve the conflicts between families or other groups and it seems to help well. (NC).
Stories of Unity	There was a family and their father who was a farmer and was very ill and one day he called everyone and told one of his sons to bring a bunch of branches. He took one and showed them that it can be broken very easily. Then he asked his 7 children to break the whole bunch, but when they tried it was hard to break them. He told them: "See how difficult it is to break a whole bunch!" His point was to have unity then no one can break you all apart. And his children always remembered his story. (NC)
Rostam & Sohrab	Rostam ends up killing his own son Sohrab in battle. They are unaware of each other's identity until Sohrab is wounded and during their final conversation they realize they are father and son.

Question 6 asked: ***Do different sub-groups within the diaspora (i.e., women, youth, 1st/2nd generation, religious authorities, business sector, etc.) play different roles?***

- A full 90% said yes, sub-groups within the diaspora do play different roles.
- While 58% of respondents overall (64% of those who said yes) gave only a general yes with no elaboration, the rest indicated specific sub-groups that played especially important roles.
- Women & youth were most commonly named as playing unique roles within the diaspora. Interestingly, youth were the comparatively least likely to name youth as a key sub-group.
- Other named sub-groups with perceived important roles include: businessmen, religious leaders, intellectuals & artists, and adults (elders, parents, teachers) who educate children and youth
- Only 4% of participants believed that different sub-groups do not play different roles (8.5% of newcomers, 3% of long-term, and only 1% of youth)
- About 6% did not answer or indicated that they did not know.

Table 10. Whether different sub-groups within the diaspora play different roles.

RESPONSES	TOTAL	Newcomer	Old-comer	Youth
YES	**235**	73	86	76
YES, no elaboration	151	46	51	54
YES, women esp. important	41	10	19	12
YES, youth esp. important	37	12	17	8
YES, businessmen esp. important	13	5	5	3
YES, religious leaders esp. important	12	3	4	5
YES, intellectuals/artists esp. important	7	3	3	1
YES, esp. adults educating children	5	2	2	1
YES, BUT bigger question is security / unity	4	2	1	1
YES, BUT religious leaders should not be playing a role	2	1	1	0
NO	**11**	7	3	1
Don't know / no answer	**15**	3	6	6

Table 11. Examples of responses to Question 6

NC	Businessmen could be very effective. Through investment in Afghanistan, they could create jobs providing people with alternative livelihoods to guns and drugs.
OC	The best role can be played by youth, because youth are more active in this society and also lack partisan political motives.
Y	Yes, women are the ones who keep the hard-working family members together and bring peace.

Question 7 asked: ***Do you feel supported in your peace building endeavours by friends, family, community organizations, community members, etc. or do you feel isolated in your work?***

- Seventy-two percent of participants indicated that they do feel supported in their peace building endeavours. This includes the 8% of people who said yes, they feel supported on a personal level, but there are not enough resources or organizational support.
- Nine percent of respondents overall reported feeling isolated. There was a range among groups, from 5% of newcomers, to 8% of old-comers, up to 14.5% of youth.
- Almost 10% noted that they did not know / could not answer because they had not been active in peace building endeavours (including 15.5% of newcomers, 10.5% of long-term, and 6% of youth)
- No answer was provided by 9% of participants.

Table 12. Whether respondents feel supported in peace building

RESPONSES	**TOTAL**	Newcomer	Long-term	Youth
YES, feel supported (by friends, family, community)	**167**	54	61	52
YES, personally, but not enough resources / organizational support	**21**	7	9	5
NO, feel isolated	**24**	4	8	12
Have not been active / Don't know	**25**	13	7	5
No answer provided	***24***	*5*	*10*	*9*

Table 13. Examples of responses to Question 7

NC	Yes, I do feel supported by family, friends, and community organizations.
OC	We do have family and friends' support, but what is missing is organizational support without which our activities are unproductive. We need organizations for this specific purpose.
Y	No, I feel isolated.

Question 8 asked: ***What immediate changes would you like to see happen in Afghanistan? How could you assist with these changes?***

Immediate changes:

- Thirty percent of respondents overall would like to see better education and more schools as an immediate change in Afghanistan. There was a broad range across groups, from just over 14% of newcomers, to 24% of old-comers, up to 52% of youth who gave this answer.
- About 23% of people named peace, security and stability in Afghanistan as an immediate change they would like to see (30% of newcomers, 17% of youth).
- The same percentage noted economic development / poverty reduction as a desired immediate change.
- About one in five participants overall would like to see immediate improvement of women's rights, and in disarming & removing warlords (including putting them on trial). While women's rights were mentioned comparatively more among youth (34% of youth, 16% of newcomers, 13% of old-comers), dealing with warlords was

comparatively less of a priority for that group (8% of youth, 23% of old-comers, almost 26.5% of newcomers).

- Strengthening the Afghan government and ending corruption was mentioned by just under 20%, again with a range among groups (31% of newcomers, 18% of old-comers, 7% of youth).
- Stopping interference by neighbours was also a change that about 20% of respondents wanted to see. This was the most common answer given by the old-comer group.
- About 17% of people would like to see immediate reconstruction of infrastructure (including health clinics & hospitals, roads, and agricultural capacity). This was a comparatively less common answer for newcomers.
- Almost 15% see building the capacity of the local labour force as a change priority.
- Other priorities for change include: promoting unity (said by 15 individuals, including 11 youth); more effective engagement of the diaspora (15 individuals, including 10 old-comers); strengthening the Afghan military (10), judiciary reform (7), more accountable and respectful military and aid presence (7), promoting moderate Islam / separation of church and state (4), and improved media coverage (2)
- Only one person did not provide an answer for this question.
- It seems likely that many people missed the last part of the question, or else chose not to answer, as only about 15% made reference to how they could assist with making these changes. Those who did respond most commonly referred to their professional experience (e.g., "As a health professional I can assist in this area." {OC}; "I can use my experience as a teacher and work in school." {NC}), or the fact they could not help currently because they are a student. Others mentioned that they would be able to help "when Pakistan stops interfering." Several youth said they could help by fundraising.

Table 14. Immediate changes respondents would like to see happen in Afghanistan.

RESPONSES	**TOTAL**	Newcomer	Old-comer	Youth
Better education / more schools	**78**	12	23	43
Peace / stability / security	**61**	25	22	14
Economic development / reduce poverty	**61**	17	22	22
Improve women's rights	**53**	13	12	28
Disarm / remove warlords, put on trial	**51**	22	22	7
Strengthen Afghan govt, end corruption	**49**	26	17	6
Stop interference by neighbours	**47**	13	29	5
Reconstruction/infrastructure (re: health care, agriculture, roads, etc.)	**44**	8	17	19
Build capacity of local labour force	**38**	10	15	13
Promote unity	**15**	3	1	11
More effective engagement of the diaspora	**15**	4	10	1
Strengthen Afghan military	**10**	3	7	0
Judiciary reform	**7**	3	3	1
More accountable and respectful foreign presence (NGOs & military)	**7**	1	6	0
Promote moderate Islam, separation of church & state	**4**	1	1	2
Promote democracy / civil society	**4**	0	1	3
More & better media coverage	**2**	0	0	2
Don't know / No Answer	***1***	*0*	*1*	*0*

Table 15. Examples of responses to Question 8

NC	- Stable peace – Government posts should be given to the qualified individuals – Improving education because ignorance is the cause of many conflicts – Reduction of poverty
OC	This is a difficult question, as the biggest problem in Afghanistan does not seem to have a simple solution. I would like to see all the war criminal, drug trafficking warlords removed from authoritative positions, and prosecuted for their crimes. The problem is that these people are powerful people, and their removal will lead to instability, or even, civil war. I am not sure how I can contribute. As a law-student, I may be able to provide some assistance in the long run by helping with the legal system there.
Y	- More rights for women (gender equality can be done through more education) – More focus on economic development / creation of jobs – Separation of religion and government (these two entities should be deal with separately and conflict will be reduced tremendously. I will contribute through fundraising.

Question 9 asked***: Are there any barriers to achieving the goals stated above?***

- Almost 38% of people named interference by neighbouring countries (especially Pakistan) as a barrier to achieving the immediate changes they would like to see (question 8). This was the most common answer given across the three groups.
- Sixteen percent of respondents saw corruption and weak leadership within the Afghan government as a barrier. Comparatively more old-comers gave this answer.
- About 14% of respondents see economic barriers / poverty, both within Afghanistan and within the diaspora in Canada, as a barrier. Newcomers were comparatively more likely to note such economic barriers.
- Lack of education and the presence of warlords each were mentioned by about 12% of participants. Warlords were a comparatively less common answer for youth.
- Just over 6% reported that lack of women's rights (most noted by youth), lack of peace / security, and the presence of too many weapons (most noted by newcomers) each were important barriers. A similar percentage said that yes, there were barriers but did not elaborate.
- Other barriers listed include: lack of unity (within Afghanistan and the diaspora)(by 8 individuals), lack of support for diaspora from governments and organizations (8), lack of a strong Afghan army (5), and inefficient use of aid (2).
- According to 10% of respondents, no barriers exist to achieving these desired changes.
- Thirteen percent of people did not provide an answer or indicated they did not know.

Table 16. Barriers to achieving changes

RESPONSES	**TOTAL**	Newcomer	Old-comer	Youth
Interference by neighbour countries	**98**	25	32	21
Government corruption / weak leadership	**42**	9	20	13
Economic barriers / poverty (w/in Afghanistan & diaspora)	**36**	16	12	8
Lack of education	**33**	10	11	12
Presence of warlords	**31**	11	16	4
Lack of women's rights	**17**	2	5	10
YES, no elaboration	**17**	8	5	4
Lack of peace/security	**16**	7	4	5
Too many weapons	**16**	9	4	2
Lack of unity (w/in Afghanistan & diaspora)	**8**	5	1	2
Lack of support for diaspora from govt & orgs	**8**	2	4	2
Lack of strong Afghan army	**5**	4	1	0
Inefficient use of aid	**2**	0	1	1
NO barriers exist	**26**	10	7	9
Don't know / No Answer	***34***	*9*	*13*	*10*

Table 17. Examples of responses to Question 9

NC	Obstacles within the diaspora: lack of economic resources; lack of support from the Canadian govt and civil societies who have the needed resources in abundance; Discouraging factors inside Afghanistan: extremely slow and intangible economic development; lack of security and on-going war in Afghanistan; presence of abundant weapons; warlords and other armed groups; neighbouring countries' interference in Afghanistan's affairs; inefficiency and corruption within the government.
OC	Yes, lack of safety / security and existence of warlords
Y	Yes, corrupt officials in Afghan government

Question 10 asked: ***Do you have the necessary connections in Afghanistan which would allow you to carry out your peacebuilding and/or development initiatives? If not, how could you establish these connections?***

- Just over one in five participants overall said that yes, they do have the necessary connections to carry out peace building and development initiatives. This ranged from slightly less than 10% of newcomers to 24% of old-comers and 29% of youth.
- The most common source of connection mentioned (mostly by youth) was through family and friends. Many people did not elaborate on their affirmative answer. Other sources of connection include: through Toronto Afghan organizations, and through media and the Internet. Three individuals noted they had connections, but could not act on them due to lack of security and/or resources.
- Thirty percent of people indicated that they do not have the necessary connections, but they had idea(s) how to establish them (from 37% of old-comers, to 30% of newcomers and 23% of youth).
- The most common idea for all groups regarding how to establish connections was through Afghan-Canadian organizations that could take the lead in providing links and economic support. Other ideas included: having governments (Canadian, Afghan) and the UN facilitate initiatives; having diaspora gatherings / talks, and using the diaspora media to share connections; establishing security and removing warlords to facilitate the forging of connections; creating 'recruiting agencies' to find skilled Afghans to meet specific needs in Afghanistan; engaging youth and women; and supporting travel costs & logistics to Afghanistan
- Just below 30% said they do not have the necessary connections and they do not have ideas on how to establish them (34% of youth, 30% of newcomers, 25% of old-comers).
- Just under one-fifth of people overall provided no answer (30% of newcomers, about 14% each of old-comers and youth).

Table 18. Whether respondents have the necessary connections to carry out peace building and development

RESPONSES	TOTAL	Newcomer	Old-comer	Youth
YES	**55**	8	23	24
Through family & friends	20	1	3	16
Yes, no elaboration	19	3	10	6
Through Toronto Afghan orgs	7	1	4	2
Through media, internet	6	2	4	0
Yes, BUT can't act on connections due to lack of security & resources	3	1	2	0
NO, but have idea(s) how to establish	**79**	25	35	19
Need organizations to provide links / economic support	48	12	23	13
Need Cdn, Afg, US govts & UN to facilitate initiatives	21	9	10	2
Need diaspora gatherings & talks, media	11	3	3	5
Need security & to remove warlords	11	4	6	1
Need 'recruiting agencies'	8	0	8	0
Need to engage youth & women	4	0	0	4
Need support to travel to Afghanistan	3	1	1	1
NO, & no idea how to establish	**77**	25	24	28
No answer provided	***50***	*25*	*13*	*12*

Table 19. Examples of responses to Question 10

NC	No. The Canadian government could be the best initiator.
OC	I, personally, don't have these connections. I hope to build some by volunteering with established organizations.
Y	Yes, my father still lives in Afghanistan.

Question 11 asked: ***Do you feel that the Afghan community in Canada, specifically the GTA, is divided or polarized? If so, where do the divisions exist and why?***

- Around 53% of respondents indicated that yes, they feel that the Afghan community in the Greater Toronto Area is divided.
- By far the most common division noted was based on ethnic / linguistic / religious / political differences. Almost 40% of people overall gave this response, including just 27% of newcomers, 37% of old-comers, and 47% of youth (almost half of whom noted that these types of division are less common among younger Afghans).
- Other answers included: due to the war (14 individuals said this), it's natural, every group has divisions (8), based on education level (4), between Afghan organizations (3), based on gender (2), between youth and elders (1), based on when people came to Canada (1). Nine people said yes with no elaboration.
- Just over 30% of people feel that there are no divisions within the community, more or less equally across the three groups.
- About one in ten said they are unsure, most commonly because they are new to Canada.
- Six percent did not provide an answer

Table 20. Whether the Afghan community in Toronto is divided

RESPONSES	**TOTAL**	Newcomer	Long-term	Youth
YES	**139**			
Btw ethnic/linguistic/religious/political groups	**97**	23	35	39
Due to the war	**14**	5	7	2
General yes, no elaboration	**9**	3	6	0
It's natural, every group has divisions	**8**	4	1	3
Based on level of education	**4**	2	2	0
Btw Afghan organizations	**3**	1	2	0
Based on gender	**2**	0	1	1
Btw youth & elders	**1**	0	0	1
Based on when came to Canada	**1**	0	1	0
NO, there are no divisions	**80**	25	27	28
Not sure (e.g., new to Canada)	**27**	14	4	9
No answer provided	***15***	*6*	*9*	*0*

Table 21. Examples of responses to Question 11

NC	I have just come to Canada so I don't know
OC	No, I do not think there is any division among Afghans.
Y	I think it is somewhat divided on the grounds of ethnicity and language etc. Tajiks, for example, socialize, work together and help each other and the same with other groups. I think that parents' old ideas and beliefs and their disposition still exist and this reflects in divisions among Afghans in the GTA. The Youth seem to get along and adopt to the new society better and these divisions don't exist among them as much.

Question 12 asked: ***Have you ever considered initiating a peace building program within the local Afghan community for the sake of unifying the community? If so, what have you done? If not, why have you not?***

- Just over one in five participants said they had or had considered initiating peace building (Only 8% of newcomers, compared to around 27% of long-term and youth)
- Almost 23% said no, because they were a newcomer or were too busy
- Twenty percent said no, believing they would not be effective due to lack of opportunities, resources, or personal skills.
- Almost 14% said no, with no elaboration.

- Four individuals said no, because there are already organizations to do this, while one person said no, because there is no problem within the community.
- Over 20% of people did not provide an answer (24% of newcomers, 22% of old-comers, only 15% of youth).

Table 22. Initiating a peace building program to unify the local Afghan community

RESPONSES	TOTAL	Newcomer	Long-term	Youth
YES	**55**	7	26	22
Support / volunteer with / participate in existing organizations & programs	22	2	4	16
Generally promote unity	15	4	8	3
Through media / writing	6	1	5	0
Started an organization / group / committee	5	0	4	1
Yes, no elaboration	3	0	1	2
Yes, BUT it requires access to resources	3	0	1	2
NO, am a newcomer / too busy	**59**	37	12	10
NO, lack of opportunity, resources, personal skills	**52**	9	23	20
NO (no elaboration)	**36**	7	11	18
NO, there are already organizations to do this	**4**	3	1	0
NO, there is no problem within community	**1**	0	1	0
No answer provided	***54***	*20*	*21*	*13*

Table 23. Examples of responses to Question 12

NC	No, because I am too busy making ends meet.
OC	I have not made an attempt. For me, I don't believe that I have the credentials to make this happen. This sort of effort requires someone with the credibility, contacts and resources to get everyone together for discussion. Once the discussion starts, there needs to be some results on which the community can build upon. I am a student, without the credibility or the language skills to make this happen.
Y	Yes, I participated in various Afghan-youth programs in school to bring Afghan youth together in Toronto.

Section 3. Discussion & Conclusions

This final section will explore in greater depth the major themes to emerge in the results. Key opportunities and challenges for diaspora engagement in peace building and development will be highlighted. The complexities of potential actors, roles, strategies, and capacity building needs within the Afghan diaspora community in Canada will be examined, along with policy considerations for the Canadian government.

Major themes to emerge

- **A focus on underlying causes: dynamics of conflict and 'roots' of peace**

  - "Peace, security and development are intertwined."

Some participants felt overwhelmed by the severity & complexity of the conflict situation, and discouraged regarding the prospects for peace and development – for example, feeling that "it won't produce tangible results, so you lose interest"; feeling that "normal people cannot do anything" because the situation is being dictated by foreign interests and interference (the number one perceived barrier to achieving change in Afghanistan, across all groups, was the interference of neighbouring countries); and feeling that development is taking one step forward two steps back, when "more schools are burnt then built."

Members of the diaspora interested in sharing their professional expertise are reluctant to return to Afghanistan at this point due to the current lack of security within Afghanistan. Respondents across groups recognized an urgent need to address the broader root causes of instability and insecurity through 1) promoting unity across the multiple levels of potential division; 2) implementing tangible economic development that is accountable, effective, culturally sensitive, and sustainable (driven by local needs and focused on building local capacities); and 3) improving education and meeting basic human and infrastructure needs throughout the country. Youth in particular mentioned the need to ensure the rights of women.

> "An even more daunting task than ensuring women's civil and political participation will be securing their fundamental rights to education and health. It is these basic entitlements that constitute the bedrock for their capacity for participation. In a context where the majority are unable to read or write, risk their lives in childbirth, have no access to roads, school or medical facilities, and are deprived access to clean water sources, capabilities and rights are severely restricted" (Kandivoti, 2005).

- **An overall willingness to engage in peace building and development**
- **Differential capacities / roles re: contributing.**

Despite obviously grasping the deep and seemingly intractable nature of many of the underlying issues, there is a keen interest in engaging in peace building and development within the study sample. Over 40% are already involved in some way, and a further 40% expressed their willingness to do so in the future.

Unquestionably, however, members of the diaspora vary widely in their will, and in their capacity, to engage. Of those who report currently contributing there is a wide continuum of activities, ranging from talking about peace with friends, to charitable fundraising, to founding organizations, to sharing professional expertise directly with government ministries in Afghanistan. The 'old-comers' in particular had contributed extensively.

Differences within the diaspora will affect how and how much members can contribute. Key factors include: socio-economic status, education level, length of time in Canada, level of involvement with organizations, particular skills, age, and gender. Indeed, 90% of participants believed that different sub-groups within the diaspora play different roles in terms of peace building and development. Generally speaking, businessmen, religious leaders, and intellectuals were seen as 'skilled' contributors (e.g., financial investments, moral authority, educated analysis), while the contributions of women, youth, and teachers/parents were valued more generally in terms of dedication, energy, and lack of 'corruption'.

The most common reasons given for not participating included being a newcomer and not knowing how to contribute effectively (a point addressed further below).

- **The complex roles of Canada, the 'host' country**

  - ¬ **Values: positive and negative influences**

> - "Canadian multiculturalism has affected our mentality; what is considered to be the cause of conflict back home is a cause of progress in Canada."
>
> - "Canadian democracy encourages people to go back home and spread it."
>
> - "Current profiling of Muslims and Muslim communities, and the stereotyping in the media here in Canada, frightens Afghans and impedes their activities."

Most of the sample felt that Canada's values had an effect on the diaspora and their approach to peace building and development. Positive influences were seen as originating in Canada's multicultural values, democratic rights and freedoms, educational opportunities, and aid to and cooperation with Afghanistan. Fewer than 10% mentioned negative influences: these were from Canada's "non-constructive" foreign policy, from the profiling of Muslims under the guise of 'national security,' or from the government's failure to engage the diaspora.

Likewise, there was a strong feeling that Afghan values should influence the Canadian government as they develop their foreign policy and development strategies, given that effective peace building is not a general concept but a particular one, reflective of the culture, traditions, people, and history of a region. As one participant put it: "Canadian policy should be based on a thorough study of Afghanistan's recent history and socio-political realities. To prepare the framework for a comprehensive policy, an utmost attempt should be made to take input from all segments of the Afghan population, both in Afghanistan and among the diaspora."

- **Engaging the diaspora: overcoming barriers, creating opportunities**

> - "Even though the diaspora has learned great democratic values from Canada, it feels marginalized as far as peacebuilding and development is concerned."
>
> - "Given that many Afghans are new to Canada there are many barriers that do not allow them to participate in peace building initiatives, i.e. they are not aware of how to make use of their expertise, they do not know how to engage with government, they do not have the time since they have to make a living etc."
>
> - "The diaspora has to get organized in order to be of any help to Afghan development and peacebuilding. There have to be gatherings, conferences and other functions to share and exchange ideas and experiences, and to mobilize the drive to help Afghanistan in an effective manner."

It is just this desire to provide input, but a lack of awareness concerning how to do so, that was one of the strongest themes to emerge from the results. Time and again, participants reflected that the Afghan diaspora in Toronto did not have the information, links, connections, or organizational support they felt was necessary to ensure meaningful engagement in peace building and development. Often repeated was the idea that they did not know how to access the Canadian government.

Generally speaking, the organization level of Afghan in Canada is low and there seems to be minimal communication between groups. Respondents indicated that they would like the Canadian government especially (along with the Afghan government and NGOs) to help mobilize the diaspora around these issues by provided economic and 'technical' support, including targeted training programs, to these communities.

Other suggestions included 'recruiting agencies' for skilled Afghan-Canadians to meet specific reconstruction needs, government-sponsored gatherings and forums to share important information and exchange ideas. Particular attention should be paid to including the voices of youth and women.

Essentially, diaspora communities want to be included as contributing stakeholders in development and foreign policy discussions. They would like assistance acquiring the 'opportunity structures' (material and organizational resources) to access the various levels of decision-making around peace building and development in their country of origin.

- **Challenges and opportunities within the Afghan-Canadian community**
    - ¬ **Adapting to life in Canada**

A 2003 study into the mental health needs of Afghans in Toronto found that the most common stressors reported include: unemployment or underemployment (52%), worry about family or friends left behind (43%), financial problems (42%), "adjusting to Canadian culture" (33%), "family conflict" (32%), "racism and discrimination" (20%), and problems with housing (19%) (SAFE 2003)

Indeed, the newcomers in this study named their personal economic situation as the key barrier preventing them from being involved in peace building and development activities. Many participants expressed their belief that the Canadian government should provide more support for settlement and integrating of diaspora members into Canadian society, in part to help them become socially and economically resourceful (e.g. improving English-proficiency). At the same time, these groups require continuing support to sustain and promote their own culture and language; and to nurture connections in Afghanistan that would support peace building efforts, something that only 20% of respondents currently have.

Cultural factors may also be a barrier. As one participant noted: "It often takes outspoken and independent individuals to take part in such projects, and that is a behaviour that is not often encouraged in Afghan culture - especially with females."

- **Need to connect and unite**

> -"There is a lack of a strong forum for promoting unity and solidarity and strong economy in the disapora. --- existence of partisan publications escalating political differences and creating tensions in the diaspora. ----lack of cooperation within the existing Afghan organizations in the diaspora."

The Afghan community is divided along ethnic, linguistic, class, gender and generational lines. The experiences, values, and expectations of the different subgroups vary. Just considering the size of the Afghan population in Toronto, it is inevitable that there will be tensions and differences within the community. A lack of unity within the local community was noted by just over half of the participants in this study, while one in three said that there were no divisions, and the rest were unsure of did not respond.

The key to peace and stability in Afghanistan, respondents believe, is unity. The same is true within diaspora communities. This can only happen if a foundation of communication is put into place, and the focus is kept on common objectives and the big picture: "what is best for Afghanistan, not yourself. Keep talking, even if you disagree" (Nassery 2003). Reassuringly, over 70% of people reported feeling personally supported in their peace building and development activities.

- **Traditions of non-violent dispute settlements**

Despite the divisions within the population, Afghans do have traditions of non-violent dispute settlement to turn to. Respondents mentioned the tradition of the inter-ethnic Loya Jirga or Grand Council convened to resolve major conflicts, and more generally looking to the guidance of groups of elders. Responses to a variety of questions reflected the idea that given how religious Afghanistan is, one of the most effective methods of addressing these 'root' conflicts would be through a more concerted effort to promote the moderate Islamic messages of harmony, tolerance, and social justice. It was stated that religious authorities are respected and the moderate ones need to be given platforms to promote peace and development,

including women's rights. There are also a variety of traditional stories people shared with the theme of unity, of how a group standing together is much stronger - stories that people could potentially share and reflect on at diaspora gatherings if divisions surface.

- **Other issues of interest:**
    - ¬ **Notable differences between groups**

Interestingly, while there clearly were differences between the target groups, they were not very major, nor particularly surprising. Differences that did emerge included: less involvement in and less confidence in regards to peace building and development among newcomers, who are presumably preoccupied with 'settlement issues', such as learning a new language, finding employment, etc, and are generally less familiar with the local Afghan diaspora community and have fewer economic resources. Fundamental, tangible security issues such as disarming warlords and strengthening the Afghan army tended to be the most salient for newcomers. Youth revealed a great deal of passion and commitment to peace building, especially through fundraising, but were also the most likely to not know or not provide an answer to questions. Youth were the most likely to feel isolated, and expressed the most 'progressive' values (for example, re: multicultural tolerance, promoting women's rights, etc.). Old-comers are clearly the most 'established', more extensively involved in organizations, and more concerned with 'broader picture' peace issues and institutional level barriers and opportunities.

- ¬ **Internet as a new key to building networks**

The 'virtual' or 'digital' diaspora made possible by Internet technologies have created new opportunities for developing relationships and sharing information, especially sites that provide 'purposive links' that beyond providing information and reports, identify specific actions individuals can take in support of peace building and development in Afghanistan (Brinkerhoff 2004). Admittedly, access to and ability to use the internet in diaspora communities is not equally distributed, so neither are the potential benefits (Westcott 2006). Innovative examples include the well-established Afghans4Tomorrow site (www.afghans4tomorrow.com) and the relatively new Afghan Gender Café site (www.afghangendercafe.org).

- **Suggestions for future research**

While this study provides a unique glimpse into the lived realities of Afghan-Canadians in Toronto as related to peace building opportunities and challenges for the diaspora, it is hopefully a first step to more in depth investigation of the themes that emerged here.

Limitations include the wording of some the questions, including the use of complex vocabulary, and the 'close-ended' nature of some of the questions that allowed for a yes / no response without elaboration. Also, given the way the sample was selected, it may not be representative of the whole Afghan diaspora community in the GTA.

It would have been interesting to gather more demographic data in order to compare look at potential impacts of gender, socio-economic status, family status, and immigration status on views of peace building and development. It may also be worthwhile collecting similar data from other major centres in Canada (Vancouver and Montreal), and in other Western nations.

Another interesting avenue for research would be to look at what the attitudes within Afghanistan towards peace building and development involvement by members of the diaspora.

Finally, it is suggested that a follow-up study be carried out with a smaller, but perhaps more representative sample, in the form of open-ended one-on-one interviews, so that responses may be probed for further details.

- **Suggested recommendations re: capacity building and policy**

1) Initially, it would helpful to create a database of all of the Afghan-Canadian groups operating in the GTA and across Canada. From this, establishing a responsive *network* or *coalition*, both within the Toronto area and nationally, could prove to be an effective mechanism for unifying the community and for mobilizing diaspora members around peace building and development issues. The Canadian government and/or NGOs should support the building of this network or coalition with financial resources and with relevant training and capacity building supports. Internet technologies should be used as a connective tool. Such a network would need to set tangible goals in order to cultivate a feeling of effectiveness and meaningful impact. Diaspora groups from different countries should also be encouraged to share strategies.

An interesting case study is available from Partners for Democratic Change, who worked with the largest Afghan community in the US to increase the organizational and leadership capacity of the coalition the community had formed to respond to improve local services and respond to the conflict situation in Afghanistan. They facilitated a series of conflict resolution and cooperative planning trainings, and helped the coalition conduct a series of 'community dialogues.' Strategies and committees were formed to focus in on key community concerns and ideas for collaborative action. Contacts with government and other NGOs were established (Partners for Democratic Change 2003).

2) The Canadian government's military and aid involvement in Afghanistan should be clear and accountable. There should be clear channels of communication and accessible systems of consultations with diaspora groups. The federal government could consider a position such as a 'diaspora' ombudsperson to facilitate such consultative processes, and to capitalize on the expertise and willingness of diaspora members.

The follow three points, with minor modifications, come from the recommendations in the Afghans of Tomorrow Conference Report (Faisel 2001), as they clearly encapsulate the major themes to emerge from the present study:

3) The Canadian government "should put pressure on the major powers and neighbouring countries to stop political interference in Afghan affairs and to promote regional cooperation and economic integration."

4) "For the Afghan diaspora, the Canadian government should give encouragement and support to Afghan scholars and intellectuals living in Canada, as well as Afghan Canadian NGOs and youth groups, to take part in the country's reconstruction. It should fund youth counsellors from the Afghan Canadian community. Canada should continue to accept, and counsel, refugees from Afghanistan. It should encourage a scheme of dual citizenship as a means to attract Afghan Canadians to work in Afghanistan. In supporting [the current] administration in Afghanistan, Canada should continue to consult with the Afghan diaspora and with moderate leaders to ensure a thorough sharing of ideas - with enough time to make well-considered decisions."

5) Canadian NGOs "should make a special effort to link with the Afghan diaspora, and bring their voices forward to policy and advocacy platforms, and to the designing of development projects. They should support establishment of a clearing-house in Canada to help co-ordinate the use of Afghan-Canadian human resources, and avoid competition for scarce resources. They should support the formation of an Afghan civil society group to monitor the honouring of pledges of development aid from donor countries. They should work to strengthen youth groups from the Afghanistan diaspora."

There will be a lifelong connection between diasporas and their homelands. Circular migration of professionals, intellectuals and development workers will be key elements in the future. With some institutional support and guidance from governments, and NGO and academic communities, the Afghan diaspora will hopefully be able to tap into its commitment and willingness to carry out a wide range of activities that will support peace building and development in Afghanistan.

Appendix A.

Map of Afghanistan and Table of Statistics

Afghanistan: Statistics

Area	647,500 km sq. (same size as Manitoba)
Provinces	34 (each province with 5 to 15 districts)
Population	25 million (UN 2005); an estimated 3.4 million more live outside the country (UNDP 2004)
Ethnic groups	Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimak 4%, Turkmen 3%, Baloch 2%, other 4%
Languages	Official: Dari (Afghan Persian) and Pashtu; (28 other languages are spoken)
Median age	17.5 years
Life expectancy	approx 43 years
Per capita income	US$232 (excluding poppy production) (2005)
Adult literacy	43% men, 14% woman (possibly as low as 1% in some districts)

Sources: www.cbc.ca/news/background/afganistan
www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/afghanistan.asp

Appendix B.

Timeline of Afghanistan: A chronology of recent key events

1919 - Afghanistan regains independence after third war against British forces
1926 - Amanullah proclaims himself king and attempts to introduce social reforms.
1929 - Amanullah flees after civil unrest over his reforms.
1933 - Zahir Shah becomes king; Afghanistan remains a monarchy for next four decades.
1953 - General Mohammed Daud becomes prime minister. Turns to Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. Introduces a number of social reforms.
1963 - Mohammed Daud forced to resign as prime minister.
1964 - Constitutional monarchy leads to political polarization and power struggles.
1973 - Mohammed Daud seizes power in a coup and declares a republic. Plays off USSR against Western powers. His style alienates left-wing factions who join forces against him.
1978 - General Daud is overthrown and killed in a coup by leftist People's Democratic Party. Conservative Islamic and ethnic leaders who resisted social changes begin armed revolt in countryside.
1979 - Power struggle between leftist leaders Hafizullah Amin and Nur Mohammed Taraki in Kabul won by Amin. Revolts in countryside continue and Afghan army faces collapse. Soviet Union sends in troops to help remove Amin, who is executed.

Soviet intervention
1980 - Babrak Karmal, leader of the People's Democratic Party Parcham faction, is installed as ruler, backed by Soviet troops. Anti-regime resistance intensifies with various mujahedin groups fighting Soviet forces. US, Pakistan, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia supply money, arms.
1985 - Mujahedin come together in Pakistan to form alliance against Soviet forces. ***Half of Afghan population now estimated to be displaced by war, with many fleeing to neighbouring Iran or Pakistan***. New Soviet leader Gorbachev says he will withdraw troops.
1986 - US begins supplying mujahedin with Stinger missiles, enabling them to shoot down Soviet helicopter gunships. Babrak Karmal replaced by Najibullah as head of Soviet-backed regime.
1988 - Afghanistan, USSR, the US and Pakistan sign peace accords and Soviet Union begins pulling out troops.
1989 - Last Soviet troops leave, but civil war continues as mujahedin push to overthrow Najibullah.
1991 - US and USSR agree to end military aid to both sides.

Mujahedin triumph
1992 - Resistance closes in on Kabul and Najibullah falls from power. Rival militias vie for influence.
1993 - Mujahideen factions agree on formation of a government with ethnic Tajik, Burhanuddin Rabbani, proclaimed president. Afghans await US assistance in rebuilding Afghanistan. Civil war erupts in Kabul as Dostom, Masoud and Hekmatyar begin to fight for power.
1994 - Factional contests continue and the Pashtun-dominated Taliban emerge as major challenge to the Rabbani government. Warlords and renegade generals establish their own rules in the areas they control
1996 - Taliban seize control of Kabul and introduce hardline version of Islam. Rabbani flees.

Taliban under pressure
1997 - Taliban recognised as legitimate rulers by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Most other countries continue to regard Rabbani as head of state. Taliban now control at least two-thirds of country.
1998 - Earthquakes kill thousands of people. US launches missile strikes at suspected bases of militant Osama bin Laden, accused of bombing US embassies in Africa.
1998 - Dostom, Masood, Hekmatyar and Rabbani establish the Northern Alliance with the help of Russia
1999 - UN imposes an air embargo and financial sanctions to force Afghanistan to hand over Osama bin Laden.
1999–2002 - The worst drought in 30 years, affecting half the population of Afghanistan.
2001 Jan - UN imposes further sanctions on Taliban.
2001 Mar - Taliban blow up giant Buddha statues in defiance of international pleas.
2001 May - Taliban order religious minorities to wear tags identifying themselves as non-Muslims, and Hindu women to veil themselves like other Afghan women.
2001 Sept - Eight foreign aid workers on trial in the Supreme Court for promoting Christianity. This follows months of tension between Taliban and aid agencies.

2001 - Ahmad Shah Masood, legendary guerrilla and leader of the main opposition to the Taliban, is killed, apparently by assassins posing as journalists.
2001 Oct - US, Britain launch air strikes against Afghanistan after Taliban refuse to hand over Osama bin Laden, held responsible for the September 11 attacks on America.
2001 Nov - US ground forces begin their attack on Afghanistan, then air strikes begin leaving 1000s dead. Opposition forces seize Mazar-e Sharif and within days march into Kabul and other key cities.

Taliban falls
2001 5 Dec - Afghan groups agree to deal in Bonn for interim government.
2001 7 Dec - Taliban finally give up last stronghold of Kandahar, but Mullah Omar remains at large.
2001 22 Dec - Pashtun royalist Hamid Karzai is sworn in as head of a 30-member interim (6 month) power-sharing government.
2002 Jan - First contingent of foreign peacekeepers in place.
2002 Apr - Former king Zahir Shah returns, but says he makes no claim to the throne.
2002 May - UN Security Council extends mandate of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) until Dec 2002. Allied forces continue their military campaign.
2002 June - Loya Jirga, or grand council, elects Hamid Karzai as interim head of state. Karzai picks members of his administration, which is to serve until 2004.
2002 July - Vice-President Haji Abdul Qadir is assassinated by gunmen in Kabul.
2002 Sept - Karzai narrowly escapes an assassination attempt in Kandahar, his home town.
2002 Dec - President Karzai and Pakistani, Turkmen leaders sign deal to build gas pipeline through Afghanistan, carrying Turkmen gas to Pakistan.
2003 Aug - Nato takes control of security in Kabul, its first-ever operational commitment outside Europe.

New constitution
2004 Jan - Grand assembly - or Loya Jirga - adopts new constitution creating Islamic state under presidential system sought by Karzai, opening way for elections but also exposing enduring ethnic divisions.
2004 Mar - Afghanistan secures $8.2bn (£4.5bn) in aid over three years.
2004 Sept - Rocket fired at helicopter carrying President Karzai misses its target; it is the most serious attempt on his life since September 2002.
2004 Oct-Nov - Presidential elections: Hamid Karzai is declared the winner, with 55% of the vote (there were more than 10.5 million registered voters; 12 election workers killed in year leading up to vote). He is sworn in December.
2005 Feb - Several hundred people are killed in the harshest winter weather in a decade.
2005 May - Details emerge of alleged prisoner abuse by US forces at detention centres.

New parliament
2005 Sept - First parliamentary and provincial elections in more than 30 years.
2005 Dec - New parliament holds its inaugural session.
2006 Feb - International donors meeting in London pledge more than $10bn US in reconstruction aid over 5 years.
2006 May - Violent anti-US protests in Kabul, the worst since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, erupt after a US military vehicle crashes and kills several people.
2006 July onwards - NATO troops take over the leadership of military operations in the south. Fierce fighting ensues as the forces try to extend government control in areas where Taliban influence is strong.
2006 Sept – Provincial director of the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs, killed by gunmen in Kandahar
2006 Oct - NATO assumes responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan, taking command in the east of the country from a US-led coalition force.

Source: BBC News (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1162108.stm)

Appendix C.

Information on Project Partners: UPEACE and AWO

The University for Peace (UPEACE)

The University for Peace (UPEACE) was established by the United Nations General Assembly to provide an international institution of higher learning dedicated to the promotion and understanding of peace. In July 2005, UPEACE commenced the preparatory work to launch an international centre in Toronto that would provide a focus for education, training and dialogue on critical issues related to the building of peace and the prevention of violence and conflict. Capitalising on Toronto's strategic location near the United Nations headquarters in New York, as well as its international, multicultural profile, the UPEACE Centre in Toronto will provide an accessible venue to offer a portfolio of professional training courses and Master's programmes and to convene highlevel dialogues, workshops and public events. UPEACE will be launching a range of pilot programming activities in Canada throughout 2006, including curriculum development workshops, public symposia, exhibitions, high-level expert forums and seminars. This high-level forum represents one of the flagship pilot activities for the UPEACE Centre in Toronto.

Digafie Debalke,
Project Officer, Secretariat for the International Centre of UPEACE in Toronto
ddebalke@upeace.org, www.upeace.org

Afghan Women's Counselling and Integration Community Support Organization

Organization Mandate & Mission

Mission Statement: The AWO is a non-profit organization committed to assisting vulnerable Afghans in Canada, in refugee camps abroad and in Afghanistan. The AWO promotes the successful settlement of Afghan refugees in Canada through advocacy, and a wide range of settlement services, which it delivers primarily in the Greater Toronto Area, but throughout the country as well. The AWO also provides assistance and protection to refugees and to internally displaced and vulnerable people in Afghanistan, through advocacy, relief, education and income-generation projects, and through sponsorship to Canada.
In all of its work, the AWO is committed to non-discrimination, equality and providing services that are culturally sensitive and designed to meet the particular needs of the Afghan community.

Mandate: The AWO is a multi-service settlement agency whose mandate is to assist Afghan women and their families, in all aspects of adaptation and integration into Canadian society. The AWO is also mandated to facilitate the resettlement of Afghan and other refugees from overseas through a refugee sponsorship program. Moreover, the AWO provides assistance to Afghan refugees overseas and to vulnerable groups in Afghanistan through lobbying, advocacy, direct assistance, relief, education and income generation programs.

Executive Director: Adeena Niazi, awo@afghanwomen.org, www.afghanwomen.org

Appendix D.

Research Waiver and Questionnaire

PROJECT OVERVIEW & WAIVER

PURPOSE

To initiate participatory action research in partnership with Canadian diaspora communities to identify the challenges and opportunities that support and impede their engagement in peacebuilding and development. The project aims to:

- Analyse the roles played and strategies used by various diaspora groups to strengthen peacebuilding and promote development in their countries of origin.
- Map the ways in which different diaspora actors may contribute positively to sustainable peacebuilding and development in their country of origin and identify factors which may foster or hinder these roles.
- Explore the conditions under which peacebuilding or development initiatives within diaspora communities in host countries might benefit peacebuilding or development in their country of origin.
- Identify opportunities to expand or enhance the effectiveness of diaspora contributions to peace and development including through improved policy frameworks and targeted education, training, or other capacity building programs.

It is planned that the process and results of the research will be:

- shared and discussed with members of additional diaspora communities within Canada;
- shared and discussed at the High Level Expert Forum ("Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora, Toronto, Canada, October, 2006);
- UPEACE's international network of partner institutions of learning; and
- diaspora research organization

WAIVER

I have read the above regarding the purpose of this research and the intentions of the researchers. I give my consent to have my opinions and comments used for these research purposes. I also agree to have my comments published in future research documents.

_____ _____

Print Name Date

_____

Signature

University for Peace

"Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora"
Community Based Participatory Action Research

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Part 1. Afghan-Canadian Community relating to AFGHANISTAN

1. Have you made any contribution towards building peace and helping development work in Canada? In Afghanistan?

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2. Do you have any peacebuilding lessons that can be shared regarding what works as well as what doesn't work regarding the facilitation of peacebuilding?

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3. What are the key conditions that appear to help the diaspora to engage in peacebuilding and development both in the country of origin (Afghanistan) and the new homeland (Canada)? For example, political, economic, social, institutional, historical, & cultural factors. What are the barriers?

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4. Do the socio-political values of host countries (Canada) affect the ways in which diaspora communities engage peace and development initiatives "back home"?

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5. Identify traditional stories of conflict resolution and peacebuilding from your homeland.

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6. Do different sub-groups within the diaspora (i.e., women, youth, 1st/2nd generation, religious authorities, business sector, etc.) play different roles?

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7. Do you feel supported in your peacebuilding endeavors by friends, family, community organizations, community members, etc. or do you feel isolated in your work?

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8. What immediate changes would you like to see happen in Afghanistan? How could you assist with these changes?

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9. Are there any barriers to achieving the goals stated above?

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10. Do you have the necessary connections in Afghanistan which would allow you to carry out your peace building and/or development initiatives? If not, how could you establish these connections?

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Part 2. Afghan-Canadian Community relations within OWN COMMUNITY

11. Do you feel that the Afghan community in Canada, specifically the GTA, is divided or polarized? If so, where do the divisions exist and why?

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12. Have you ever considered initiating a peace building program within the local Afghan community for the sake of unifying the community? If so, what have you done? If not, why have you not?

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A Colombian Diaspora? Characteristics, tensions and challenges in transnational engagements

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This case study examines the experience of Colombians in Canada, focusing on their engagements with their country of origin or nationality. In this paper, we draw on research conducted in three Canadian cities for two separate projects. We outline the characteristics of the political and social engagement of Colombian immigrants, focusing on the tensions and challenges faced by the various groups in relation to a spectrum of political issues regarding the resolution of the armed conflict and peace building in Colombia. Two scenarios are reviewed: the transnational solidarity organizing in the Greater Toronto area, and the characteristics, experiences and challenges for organizing and political engagement of Colombian refugees in Vancouver and Sherbrooke. We argue that the Colombian case offers insight into the challenges and obstacles facing diaspora groups involved in conflict resolution and peace building. In cases such as this one, these challenges may prove insurmountable. The presentation will challenge the assumption that diaspora groups can or will necessarily involve themselves in peace-building, particularly when conflict is ongoing, unresolved, and largely glossed as criminal and drug related, and not political.

Introduction

The premise that diasporas, emigrants, or ethnic groups with ties to a nation of origin can or will participate in peace building and development rests on the assumption that members of the group have the interest and capacity to do so. Interest and capacity are intimately bound up with how groups negotiate membership in their nation of origin. This negotiation involves multi-faceted state-diaspora relations, including the political relationship between groups of emigrants who construct an aspect of their identity based on their context of departure (refugees, exiles, others). From a given nation-state of origin, different groups of emigrants will negotiate specific modes of relating with state authorities and non-state actors in the home country. We begin from the position that these dynamically negotiated relations shape the interest and capacity, as well as specific forms, of participating in the homeland. Consequently, there is variation in the extent to which emigrant groups may wish or be able to engage in peace building or development activities, and attention should focus on understanding processes that enable or constrain such participation.

In this paper, we address the general question of how Colombians in Canada negotiate their membership in the Colombian nation-state. In order to operationalize this general problematic, we examine forms of community organizing among Colombians in three Canadian settings. The main part of the paper turns around an analysis of two broad kinds of initiatives: those related to settlement and incorporation in Canada, and those oriented toward Colombia. We argue that settlement and incorporation have been an urgent priority, although there is also a history of homeland oriented activities.

However, the history of the latter type of initiatives calls into question their fit with emerging models of diaspora-homeland engagement.

According to the Ministry of External Relations of Colombia, 10% of Colombians live overseas with close to 48% of this total living in North America (http://portal.minrelext.gov.co; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2004). Migration to North America has been constant since the 1960s with two major waves of migration: a first wave that started in the 1960s[1] and extended to the 1970s and a second—and largest—wave that took place between the 1990s and 2000s, particularly during the period between 1999 and 2003.[2] Immigrants in this second wave are extremely heterogeneous in terms of region of origin, rural/urban background, education and socioeconomic status, and reasons for departure. With this second wave there were also changes in the forms of migration as a result of the increase in forced migration.

The paper draws on research conducted in several settings in Canada for two separate projects[3]. We outline the characteristics of the transnational political and social engagement of Colombian immigrants, focusing on the tensions and challenges faced by groups involved in raising awareness about the conflict in Colombia, and their efforts to contribute to the resolution of the armed conflict and peace building in Colombia. Two scenarios are reviewed: the transnational solidarity organizing in the Greater Toronto area and the characteristics, experiences and challenges for organizing and political engagement of Colombian refugees in Canada. We argue that the Colombian case offers insight into the challenges and obstacles facing diaspora groups involved in conflict resolution and peace building. In cases such as this one, these challenges may prove insurmountable. The presentation will challenge the assumption that diaspora groups necessarily involve themselves in peace-building and development, particularly when conflict is ongoing, unresolved, and largely glossed as criminal and drug related, and not political.

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[1] According to Guarnizo (2004), this migration takes place at the end of the Colombian civil war known as "la violencia" and when the government of the United States introduced reforms to migration laws that assigned a country quota.

[2] This migration responds to three major factors: the worsening of the armed conflict in Colombia, the deterioration of the social and political space for democratic participation, and the economic crisis Colombia underwent between the late 1980s and during the 1990s as a result of the shift towards a neoliberal economy (Guarnizo, 2004; Riaño, 2006).

[3] One project was collaborative research conducted by the "Latin American Research Group" (LARG), composed of Luin Goldring and two colleagues, Patricia Landolt (University of Toronto) and Judith Bernhard (Ryerson University). It was part of a broader SSHRC funded project directed by Michael Lanphier, on "Social Cohesion in a Global Era: Transnational Solidarities and Newcomer Integration." For information on the LARG see http://www.yorku.ca/cohesion/LARG/html/largindex2.htm The second project is a three year project entitled "Forced Migration of Colombians: A Comparative Study on Fear, Memory and Public Representations in Colombia, Ecuador and Canada." The project is a collaboration between Pilar Riaño-Alcalá at the University of British Columbia and Colombian researcher Martha Villa in Corporación Región (a social research and popular education organization in Colombia). Fredy Rivera in the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Ecuador coordinates the project in Ecuador. The project is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and the Colombian Institute of Science and Technology, *Colciencias*.

The paper is divided in three sections. The first section provides a brief background on the conflict in Colombia. The second section describes the migratory dynamics and places of settlement of Colombians in Canada. The third section discusses the characteristics, dynamics and political positioning of Colombians in Canada. In the final section we present conclusions.

Background

Contextualizing the War and Humanitarian Crisis in Colombia[4]

The characteristics of the Colombian conflict defy any simple analysis. Colombian violence is the most serious crisis affecting the continent due to its unique interlinking of guerrilla warfare, dirty war and organized crime, its war on drugs, and the prevalence of social/everyday violence and its regional impact. An important element in the dynamics of the Colombian conflict is than more than two armed actors are involved in the struggle over power and that the victims are not mostly from one sector. Left wing guerrillas, right wing paramilitary forces, the Colombian armed forces and organized crime (mafia) all have a proven record of human rights abuses, violations of international humanitarian law and a history of porous alliances and fragmentation. As Maria Teresa Uribe (2006:3-4) notes "we are not faced with a vertical model of victimization with a well-defined oppressor, nor are there horizontal models or symmetrical barbarisms where the victims and the victimizers are situated in two clearly defined sides as occurred in the Central American civil wars or in the Balkans. In the case of Colombia, all classes, social organizations and territorial spaces have been alternatively affected by differing armed actors, in the context of a mobile and fluid conflict that fragments and is reconfigured at a rapid pace."

Over the last century, Colombia has experienced different phases and forms of violence. The armed conflict between the guerrillas and the army has its roots in the early 1960s, when the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) emerged. FARC is the oldest and most powerful guerrilla group in the country, with 17,000 active members and a presence in more than 60% of the national territory. It was formed in the mid-50s in response to the offensive launched by the military government against Communist-led enclaves of small landholders. The ELN was founded in the 1960s and was inspired by the Cuban revolution. It is the second largest guerrilla group. In the 1980s, the Colombian illegal drug economy developed into one of the most powerful in the world, controlling the management and distribution of cocaine as well as playing an important role in the processing of the alkaloid (Salazar 1998). The drug economy penetrated all institutions of society (judiciary, army, church, government) and recruited large numbers of youth into urban gangs (Riaño, 2006). In these years, paramilitary organizations consolidated their power in the countryside with support from wealthy landowners and the drug cartels. By the late 1990s, these organizations had expanded throughout the country and advanced a campaign of terror

[4] This section draws on previous work and writing. See Riaño, 2006.

and death to consolidate their territorial control. Both the guerrillas and the paramilitary finance some of their operations with drug money. The Colombian army plays many roles in this violence, having a documented record of some of its members' support for paramilitary activities and violence (Arnson, 2005; Romero, 2003).

By 2002, Colombia became the epicentre of the most far-reaching US-backed counter-terrorist effort in the Americas. The authorization by the US government for Colombia to use the $3 billion in aid granted under Plan Colombia for a war on drugs to finance the State's war on terror resulted in increased military aid, the doubling of the number of Colombian army personnel trained in the US (15,000 Colombian military and police officers trained by the US since 2002), and the further involvement, in quantity and scope, of both US armed forces and "private contractors" (mercenaries) in training and military actions (Isacson et al. 2004; U.S. Institute of Peace 2004).

In 2002 peace negotiations between the conservative government of Andres Pastrana and the FARC guerrillas failed and Alvaro Uribe was elected president for the period 2002-2006. Uribe's campaign for the presidency capitalized on the distance between the two sides and the hardening of public opinion against a negotiated end to the conflict. He proposed, as his main goal, a democratic security policy that promised a crackdown on guerrilla activities as part of a war on terrorism (Leech 2004; Transnational Institute 2005; Uribe 2004; U.S. Institute of Peace 2004). This policy allowed Uribe to take exceptional measures to re-establish public order, including placing entire regions such as the Arauca province or Commune 13 (in Medellín) under military control, and creating a controversial network of paid civilian informants.[16]

Currently, the government of Alvaro Uribe (re-elected for the period of 2006-2010) has negotiated a large-scale demobilization with the Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, AUC), a united front of various paramilitary groups. Close to 25,000 paramilitary members demobilized between December 2004 and June 2006. A controversial new law of Justice and Peace has been approved after widespread debate on issues of justice and reparation and the reduction of sentences for the paramilitary in exchange for demobilization. The government is also engaged in peace talks with the National Liberation Army but has not advanced any negotiations with the FARC guerrillas. Peace negotiations in Colombia are not taking place within a single and centralized process but have been held separately with each actor indicating the multiple interests, dynamics and forces at play in a peaceful resolution of the conflict and in the negotiation of peace agreements.

Colombia faces a critical humanitarian crisis with close to 3 million people internally displaced. Currently 260,000 Colombians have taken refuge in neighbouring countries, like Ecuador, and more distant countries, such as Canada while the internal crisis of displacement continues (ACNUR, 2003; Codhes, 2002; US Committee for Refugees, 2005). In 1997, in response to the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis and the lobbying of refugee rights and solidarity groups, the Canadian government included Colombia as one of the six countries considered as a refugee source country. The Canadian government classifies countries as a source country after an evaluation that examines whether the citizens of this country are living in refugee like situations as a result of being affected by civil war or because their fundamental human rights are not

respected.[5] Residents who are under these conditions are eligible to make a refugee claim to the Canadian government without having to leave the country and can become government or private sponsored refugees. Over six thousand Colombians were granted refugee status and resettled from Colombia to Canada since 1997 under this type of humanitarian-protected persons abroad class (CIC, 2005).

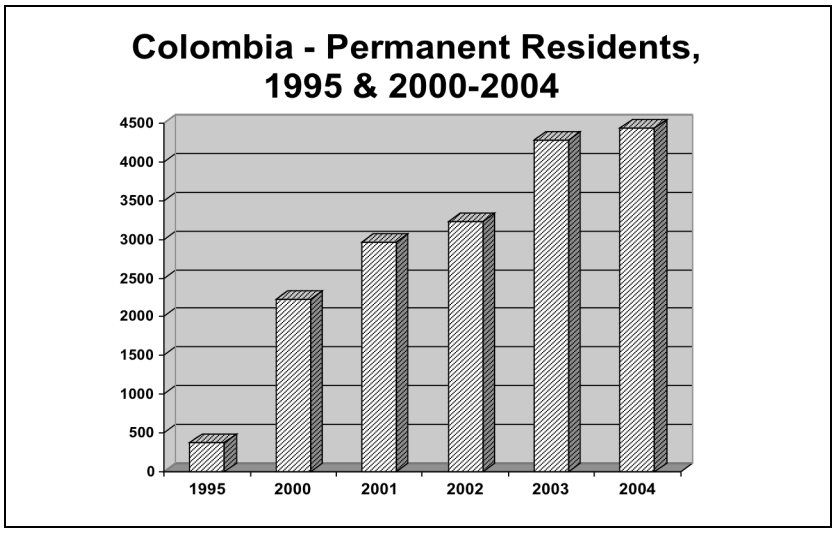
By 2004, Colombia became the main source of inland refugee claimants in Canada. Most of these claims were made at the US-Canadian border. In December of 2004, the Safe Third Country Agreement was implemented to establish that Canada and United States were both safe countries for refugee claimants and each country could return refugee claimants who have travelled through the other country, with a few exceptions (Harvard Law School, 2006). The agreement had a direct effect on Colombians as 90% of the refugee claims made by Colombians between 2002 and 2004 were made at the border of US and Canada. As a result, the number of refugee claims decreased dramatically with Colombian refugee claimants seeing their access to humanitarian protection endangered.[6] In the first months of 2005, for example, refugee claims from Colombians decreased by 70% compared to the number of claims made in the first six months of 2004 (CCR, 2005).

Colombians in Canada

The migration of Colombians to Canada dates back to the 1950s but it is only towards the end of the 1990s that it shows a significant increase both in the economic immigrant class and the refugee class. By 2003, Colombians represented 16.2% of all landings as permanent residents from South/Central America and the USA – second only to the United States as a source country (CIC, 2004). By 2005, Colombia became one of the top ten source countries of new immigrants to Canada (CIC, 2005) and the main source of refugees from the Americas. In Quebec, Colombia is the top source country of immigrants to the province (Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautès Culturelles, 2006; Osorio, 2006). This migratory wave is the result of several factors related to the economic crisis that took place in Colombia towards the end of the 1990s, the humanitarian crisis, the worsening of the armed conflict and the change in strategy by the armed actors seeking territorial control of vast regions of Colombia.

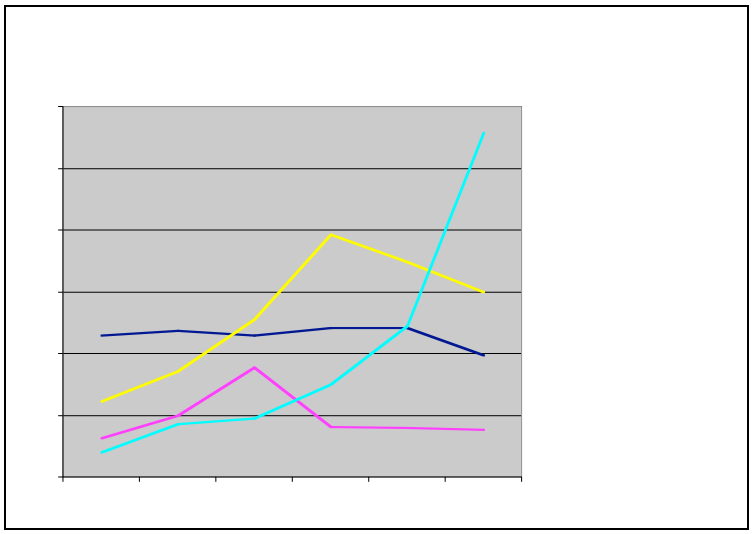
[5] This evaluation is conducted by the Source Country Review Committee, which includes representatives from the Refugee Branch and International Region of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Department of Foreign Affairs of Canada.

[6] Two recent reports document the impact of the agreement on Colombians. A recently released report by the Harvard Law School (2006) and a report by the Canadian Council for Refugees (2005) indicate the consequences of sending Colombians back to United States to make a refugee claim, a country in which the rates of acceptance of refugee claims by Colombians is low and "where several aspects of the U.S asylum system pose major obstacles to Colombian refugees seeking protection in United States" (Harvard Law School, 2006: 3).



Source: CIC, 2005 (Stats provided by CIC)

Between 1990 and 2004, 29,236 Colombians landed in Canada with 13,920 Colombians of this total being granted protection[7]. The number of Colombians immigrants to Canada, however, is higher, as this number does not include temporary residents, a category that includes those awaiting a decision on their refugee claim or those who have been accepted as refugees but are waiting for their permanent residence status. By 2002-2003, a shift had taken place, with the number of Colombian refugees increasing sharply and the migration pattern changing from one involving mostly economic migrants to one characterized by predominantly forced migration.



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005

[7] Data on landings of Colombians by category of immigration and destination was provided to the project Forced Migration of Colombians by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC.

Ontario and Quebec receive the majority of new immigrants, with close to 80% of Colombians settling in these provinces. Until 2002, Ontario was the province receiving the largest number of Colombian immigrants but by 2003, Quebec was receiving larger numbers. The change is the result of the increase in government assisted refugees coming from Colombia who were resettled in Quebec. In 2003, for example, 75% of government assisted Colombian refugees were resettled in Quebec. However, there are differences when we examine the distribution of refugee claimants by city. Most refugee claimants settle in Ontario (80%) and a significant proportion of them go to middle size cities such as London (31% in 2005, in contrast to 17% in Toronto).

The Colombian community can be characterized as a recent community, as close to half of Colombian permanent residents in Canada arrived after 1999. Similar to United States, the last wave of migration to North America exhibits considerable diversification, away from the typical profile of earlier immigrants who tended to be urban, professionals and from specific regions of Colombia (Guarnizo, 2004). Refugees, most of whom arrived after the year 2000, constitute a socially heterogeneous group with a greater variety of regional, educational and ethnic backgrounds. Fieldwork conducted in Canada and a review of the records of some of the immigrant settlement agencies show that this also holds for Colombians in Canada.

Case Studies

1. The Greater Toronto Area: Ad-hoc Transnational Solidarity[8]

Community organizing among Colombians in the GTA can be divided into two broad categories based on the orientation of the groups' initiatives: those having to do with settlement in Canada, and those related to Colombia—transnational engagements. Each tells us about how Colombians in Canada/GTA are negotiating distinct relations vis-à-vis Colombia. Organizing initiatives related to settlement and incorporation can be broken down into four clusters: sports clubs, cultural associations, business and professional associations, and a support and lobby group focused on family reunification. Groups in these categories were formed for different purposes, such as recreation, networking, and lobbying Canadian policy makers. Some, like the family reunification and business and professional associations, address specific challenges related to settlement in Canada and involve interaction with Canadian government offices and politicians. They share the fact that Colombian politics and the conflict there are not part of their agenda, in fact, they could be considered a-political in terms of relations with Colombia. None of their work involves lobbying Canadians in relation to the situation in Colombia, or working with institutions or organizations in Colombia (except for possible business connections). On the contrary, while they have good relations with the

[8] Data used in this section were collected as part of the LARG project. Specifically, data used here were gathered through individual and group interviews with Colombian activists, a focus group interview with other Colombians, and focus group interviews with Canadians involved in human rights, refugee advocacy, faith based groups and solidarity work. L. Goldring acknowledges the collaborative source of the data. Some of the ideas presented in this section draw on a paper by Landolt and Goldring (2006).

Colombian consulate, their activities focus almost exclusively on improving their business or employment possibilities in Canada, and bringing together family members—again, in Canada. When Colombia is part of the agenda, it is in relation to trade or culture, topics that can be addressed without entering into discussions about politics.

There are several reasons for the avoidance or absence of Colombian politics on these organizations' agendas. One straightforward reason is that their priorities are framed around settlement needs and the desire to achieve socioeconomic parity or mobility vis-à-vis their status in Colombia. A deeper reason is related to the pervasive mistrust generated by the conflict in Colombia. And third, the Colombian consul in Toronto has urged Colombians to avoid the topic of conflict, urging them instead to focus on what unites them.

The settlement-oriented organizations and initiatives speak to the importance of negotiating a place within Canada, one where Colombian-ness is celebrated through national holidays and other ethno-national and cultural celebrations, but where civic membership in the nation of origin is a non-issue. Colombians abroad have the right to vote in presidential and senate elections, but settlement-oriented groups do not make claims upon or challenge the Colombian state based on their membership in that political community. The membership they seem to be articulating is as a-political ethnic nationals, not one based on civic trans-nationalism. We could characterize it as the negotiation of transnational liberal membership, with Colombians maintaining social and economic ties with family or business connections on an individual basis, without challenging the socio-political status quo. Settlement oriented organizations might be ideal "diaspora and development" interlocutors. However, with the exception of occasional disaster-induced philanthropy or similar charitable contributions, they did not display past experience or potential interest in this area.

Initiatives undertaken by Colombians that are related to Colombia are different, and speak to a different kind of relationship being negotiated with the Colombian (and Canadian) state. These initiatives have been carried out by a loose network of committed solidarity activists, and are explicitly political in that they have sought to raise awareness of the conflict in Colombia, have been critical of the Colombian government and other actors in the conflict, and have worked to influence Canadian policy and institutions with respect to Colombia.[9] They have worked with faith-based, labour, human rights, indigenous, and other grassroots groups in Colombia; and in Canada, with parliamentarians and other politicians as well as groups in civil society. They are negotiating membership in both the Colombian and Canadian states based on active citizen participation. Moreover, their relationship with Colombia is complicated as it

[9] There have been instances of charitable initiatives undertaken by some of the settlement-oriented groups. These include fund-raising for orphanages, to buy artificial limbs for specific individuals, victims of natural disasters in Colombia, and for the South and Southeast Asian Tsunami in 2005. However, these philanthropic activities have been carried out as non-political activities, that is, those focusing on Colombia have not involved any re-framing of the conflict in Colombia. This, together with the fact that they were carried out by groups whose mandate was settlement oriented rather than transnational, moves us to exclude them from the current analysis.

involves opposition to the government and various armed groups, combined with solidarity with other sectors of Colombian society.

Transnational solidarity activists challenge the current regime's way of framing the conflict and are unlikely to be seen as viable interlocutors in Colombian nation building. They have not been able to generate widespread legitimacy and support among Colombians or Canadian civil society, and most of their links with Canadian civil society have been project specific and have not resulted in long-term partnerships. This, together with the continuing complexity of the situation in Colombia, the fear and mistrust it generates in Colombia and in Canada, and other factors, produce the result that homeland engagements appear to be ad-hoc, sporadic, and conducted by a small minority, rather than institutionalized and stable. Consequently, it is hard to imagine these experiences as laying the foundation for durable participation in peace building and development. The rest of this section expands on these points by elaborating on the transnational solidarity activities undertaken by Colombians in the GTA.

Colombian transnational solidarity organizing in the GTA

The history of Colombians organizing around human rights and solidarity with various social groups in Colombia dates back to the early 1980s. The *Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Colombia*, formed in the early 1980s, is the earliest human rights initiative mentioned by Colombian solidarity respondents in the GTA. A few years later, in 1985, some of those who worked in the Committee formed the *Asociación Colombiana Canadiense* (ACC). In 1988 they adopted a different name in order to make their work more visible to Canadian society, and became the *Canadian Colombian Association* (CCA). The Association's objective was to "denounce human rights violations in Colombia as a way of informing and influencing Canadian public opinion about Colombia."[10] Specific activities included organizing or helping to organize speaking tours by Colombian union members, indigenous activists, and others, to educate Canadian audiences. The Association also conducted research, lobbied Canadian parliamentarians, and participated in organizing several key events with Canadian civil society groups, mainly from faith-based organizations and unions. In 2003, the CCA became the *Colombian Action Solidarity Alliance* (CASA), which continues to the present. Over the years, various projects related to the work of the ACC, CCA and CASA have been undertaken, sometimes under names suggesting the existence of new or separate organizations—such as RISC (Research and International Solidarity for Colombia), and the Minga, both related to the Opinion Tribunal (see below). In fact, these organizational changes reflect the flexibility of Colombian solidarity activists, who chose to create working-group like structures to take on specific tasks or initiatives. Despite the changing names, the history of these organizations is marked by an element of continuity in that a core set of activists undertook most of the work, with additional supporters coming and going.

[10] Interview, May 24, 2005.

The history of the solidarity organizations and their initiatives points to a rich set of experiences conducted in what appears to be a somewhat sporadic or ad-hoc manner. Organizations changed names or established separate initiatives because of personal or political differences among members, but also in response to conjunctural and strategic considerations, including events in Colombia and opportunities in Canada. For example, in the late 1980s, a forum was organized in Ottawa to discuss strategy around solidarity with Colombia. Church, labour, human rights and Colombian-led solidarity groups were present. It was clear that there were different views regarding the situation in Colombia, where the M-19 guerilla group was in the process of demobilizing.[11] One Colombian participant recalls the forum as a "key moment" for those working on Solidarity because it brought together people from a number of institutions and sectors who did not normally have a chance to dialogue. However, it was also clear that there were different interpretations of events taking place in Colombia, as well as the best strategies for solidarity groups. External events proved to be both an opportunity for gathering and dialogue as well as a challenge.

The case of an Opinion Tribunal that took place in 1999, and a series of processes and initiatives that spun off from it, will illustrate the transnational solidarity undertaken by Colombians, as well as some of the challenges encountered in the process. In 1998, a human rights conference brought together human rights advocates from Mexico, Canada and the United States. This facilitated networking with civil society actors. Shortly after that, prompted by a massacre in the city of Barrancabermeja in May of 1998, the CCA approached the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America (ICCHRILA) and the Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW) about organizing a hearing or tribunal process. With their support and that of other civil society organizations, the quasi-judicial opinion tribunal was organized and took place in Toronto, followed by hearings in Barrancabermeja and Montreal. The Toronto hearing, held May 30 and 31, 1999, was presided by a panel of notable Canadian "judges," and witnesses were brought from Colombia to present their account of the events. Although the Colombian government was invited, there was no government participation. The tribunal's final decision was timed to coincide with the first state visit by then Colombian president Pastrana to Canada. The panel of judges found, using International Law, that both crimes against humanity and war crimes had been committed, and that Canada had jurisdiction to make findings against Colombia because of the violation of international human rights law.

The Tribunal had impact at several levels. Immediately following the verdict:

> …the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade announced it had decided to "conduct hearings on the current situation in

[11] The M-19 had staged a siege and hostage taking in the Palace of Justice in 1985. According to an ICCHRILA report, Colombians were divided over the demobilization. On one hand, there was support for demobilization as part of peace building. On the other hand, some thought the transition from guerrilla to political party allowed by the demobilization let the guerrilla group off too easily for the deaths involved in the siege. Others remained unsatisfied because they felt the government's role in the siege had not been adequately investigated (ICCHIRLA 1999)

> Colombia as soon as possible." A news release stated the decision was "as a result" of the findings of the tribunal, which called for parliamentary hearings as one of twelve recommendations (ICCHRLA 1999).

Briefings were produced for this and other Canadian government committees, and for presentation at U.N. Human Rights Committees. The tribunal was extremely effective in terms of drawing attention to atrocities and impunity in Colombia and generating responses from Canadian government authorities. It also received press coverage in Colombia. But it also generated some confusion. In particular, "people in Colombia were confused, they thought it was a real tribunal, there were reactions from all levels of government here and there."[12]

The tribunal organizing process was also important because it was one of several important experiences of collaboration between Colombians and Canadian civil society. ICCRHILA continued to conduct refugee support and advocacy work, helping human rights advocates, trade unionists, indigenous leaders, and others threatened by violence to leave Colombia. It also continued to produce policy briefs about Colombia, and supported production of a film critical of Canadian corporations in Colombia. The CAW supported a campaign against Coca-Cola for anti-union repression, as well as speaking tours of activists such as Kimy Pernia, an indigenous leader who organized opposition against a hydroelectric dam. (Kimy Pernia came to Canada twice, but was later disappeared.) The CAW also worked with the United Church to fund a film about Colombia called "The Hidden Story."

The formation of RISC was another positive outcome of the Tribunal. In 1999, Colombians involved in support work for the tribunal formed a research and information group called RISC (Research and International Support for Colombia). However, one can see tensions surfacing in accounts about RISC's duration and its place in the history of Colombian-led solidarity. According to a participant in a Canadian Solidarity focus group:

> In 1999 [from the] tribunal, people formed another organization called RISC, and they did research. It lasted for one year. [They also] formed the LASOS coalition, which lasted 2 years, and dissolved. Then the CCSC (Canada Colombia Solidarity Campaign) was formed, until 2003. Out of that came CASA.[13]

Colombian activists also acknowledge difficulties in Colombian organizations:

> Out of that support group came RISC. And there was the twinning proposal (sister cities and visible linkages), and from there a campaign was initiated but with many difficulties.[14]

[12] Solidarity focus group, S-1.
[13] Solidarity focus group, S1.
[14] Interview June 30, 2005 - #1.

However, while Colombian participants acknowledged divisions based on different visions on the nature of the conflict among Colombians, they also pointed to tensions between Colombians and some Canadian organizations. Relations between RISC and the church groups became strained after the tribunal. A member of the CCA recalls the feeling that the Association was being used, that Canadian groups took advantage of its contacts and ability to mobilize Colombians, but failed to adequately acknowledge the group's role in organizing the Tribunal.[15]

With the Tribunal experience forming part of their accumulated organizing experience, RISC and CCA members organized a project known as the Colombia Minga. The project was supported by the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, and involved a social justice/ human rights educational tour of Colombia. The plan was to take a group of notable Canadians, people who upon their return would be able to help to shape Canadian public opinion and policies. The list of Canadian participants included NDP parliamentarians, academics, CAW members, religious leaders, indigenous leaders, human rights workers, lawyers, students, etc. Through their contacts with grassroots organizations in Colombia, RISC and Campaign organizers set up meetings in different parts of the country with unionists, human rights commissioners, NGOs, witnesses of acts of terror and violence, and activists in women's, indigenous, and human rights organizations. The tour was successful in generating long-term awareness, interest, and follow-up activities among a broad spectrum of Canadians in a position to shape opinion regarding Colombia.

Following the Minga, the CCA transformed into CASA. The last few years have witnessed changes in membership, with some of the long-standing activists leaving the group, citing burn-out as well as differences. The exact reasons for the divisions are not always clear. In some cases, they are related to different perspectives regarding the situation in Colombia, particularly the armed insurgency:

> There has not been an explicit position in favour of the armed groups, but on the whole our position has been to establish some distance between armed groups and our projects. There are people who think we have to support the armed groups, but we maintain a critical perspective. When people arrive who have direct connections to those movements, there are always tensions.[16]

The point is less about the specific source of tension, and more about the need to reflect on the overall dynamic of transnational organizing by Colombians. Clearly there has been a tremendous amount of energy devoted by Colombians and Canadian civil society groups to lobbying, outreach, and education around the conflict and human rights violations in Colombia. Elements from these two sectors have come together for particular projects, but Colombians have not formed institutionalized organizations or long-term partnerships with Canadian civil society groups. Some solidarity activists argued that they chose not to institutionalize their activities, but instead opted for a flexible form of organization that could respond to specific situations and agendas, while

[15] Interview May 24, 2005.
[16] Interview June 30, 2005 - #2.

others noted their difficulty in accessing funds from Canadian sources, other than for specific projects.

In addition to difficulties within solidarity organizations and between them and Canadian groups, solidarity activists face the general problem of organizing among immigrants who come from a society torn apart by fear and violence. As the number of Colombians entering Canada has risen, social and political cleavages found in Colombia have resurfaced in Canada. One respondent who was not involved in solidarity work recounted a story about an acquaintance running into his kidnapper at a Tim Hortons. Others spoke about political divisions more directly:

> Those who arrived in the 70s had no interest in this type of work [solidarity]. Now many people from the right are arriving, people who sympathize with the paramilitaries. In Quebec City there are many from the right, and there have been death threats against people on the left.
>
> There are people from the CUT here, people who were in danger. They put these people in places… they find themselves with people with paramilitary ties… there are people with ties to drug traffickers.
>
> There are English schools where there have been confrontations between Colombians, members of the police and the army. There are professionals who have been kidnapping victims, or professionals who leave because of guerilla violence, and you can't ask them to change their position vis-a-vis the left.[17]

This confirms work on Colombians in other settings that notes the prevalence of fear and suspicion as an obstacle to community organization.

2. Colombian Refugees in Vancouver and Sherbrooke[18]

The most common form of association among Colombians in Canada is developed around settlement and incorporation aims. According to the program "*Colombia nos Une*" of the Ministry of External Relations of Colombia, there are twenty-three associations of Colombians in Canada registered in their database (www.colombianosune.org/). The typical profile is of an organization created to support Colombians in their incorporation process through information (about resources and services or job related), linkages to Canadian society and cultural activities. These associative forms tend to have a single orientation towards the country of settlement and their linkages with Colombia are tenuous and limited to dissemination of assorted news (in their webpages or bulletins) and the celebration of national holidays. The organization

[17] Interview June 30, 2005. #2.

[18] Information for this section was gathered through participant-observation, interviews and workshops conducted with refugee men and women in Vancouver and Sherbrooke for the project Forced Migration of Colombians. Martha Colorado in Vancouver and Amantina Osorio in Montreal have coordinated fieldwork and data collection in collaboration with Pilar Riaño-Alcalá.

of commemorative events that generally gather large numbers of Colombians represents one of the main activities of these associations. Similar to what has been observed in United States, these are instances that temporarily bring together Colombians across class, regional or ethnic differences for a symbolic celebration of nationhood. They represent the few spaces where Colombians temporarily and collectively negotiate their ties and loyalties to the homeland (Cepeda, 2004; Guarnizo, Sánchez and Roach, 1999).

Fieldwork conducted in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia indicates the diversity of Colombian organizations, and shows that they function mostly in an ad hoc manner with a small and highly mobile membership, and are often fragmented along class and regional lines. Interviews and fieldwork have further suggested the fragility of formal and informal organizations and social networks as a source of social cohesion for Colombians. This weak social cohesion is the result of fragmentation and distrust across class, regional and ethnic lines; the persistence of political violence in Colombia, stigmatization and stereotyping of Colombians and the Colombian conflict as drug-related, and the maintenance of a political culture rooted in a distrust of institutions (Colliers, 2004; Gamarra, 2004; Guarnizo and Días, 2004; Guarnizo, Sánchez and Roach, 1999; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller, 2003; Sánchez, 2003). The migration dynamics channelling people to their city of residence, the characteristics of the local Colombian and Latin American community and the role played by solidarity, settlement or intercultural organizations in facilitating associative processes also influence the cohesion and functioning of these organizations. The associative dynamics in the cities of Vancouver and Sherbrooke illustrate the diverse dynamics in local communities and suggest some of the obstacles for a transnational engagement.

In Vancouver there are organizations such as Life and Peace Colombia that seek to educate Canadians on the humanitarian crisis in Colombia through performances, community presentations and film festivals. In both cases, the organizations have the participation of Colombian refugees and other Colombian immigrants but also include other Latin Americans and/or Canadians from various backgrounds. These organizations seek to engage Canadians in a better understanding of the conflict in Colombia with the aim of mobilizing future support for solidarity and human rights campaigns. Their linkages with Colombia are with specific social movements and they have played a role in disseminating information on their peace building initiatives, circulating alerts on human rights violations, and occasionally coordinating or supporting tours of their leaders to Canada. Their work is mostly focused on Canadian civil society, and seeks to promote a better understanding of the humanitarian situation in Colombia and the various social movements involved in peace building and human rights work in Colombia. These organizations do not engage directly in dialogue with the Colombian state.

In Vancouver, the use or support of ethnic or national networks for the settlement and incorporation process among Colombians is weak, and appears to be in response to a legacy of suspicion about the region of origin and political affiliation or class divisions. A Colombian woman describes this feeling as follows: “Fear has made [it so] that many Colombians do no accept each other, fear, dreadful fear and precaution.”[19] Distrust is one

[19] Memory workshop in Vancouver, February 2005

of the tangible effects of the climate of terror, threats and accusations that characterize daily life amidst war. Distrust does not disappear from the refugees' lives as they arrive into a new society even as far away as Canada. For the refugees in Vancouver, distrust tends to dominate relations among Colombians:

> .. We arrive here and continue to be intolerant, and this intolerance creates distrust. I have noticed that here … if you come from a specific region [in Colombia] right away you are associated with a particular armed actor in Colombia.[20]

Places such as English classes, churches or food banks become staging areas for rumours upon the arrival of members of the armed groups, reactivating feelings of danger and the apprehension of being identified with specific interests and politics in Colombia. "[A] large number of people are arriving and some of them can be … other people can feel them like a threat, it doesn't matter what side they are on.[21]

The presence of fear and distrust and the weak development of social networks take place in the context of a city with a large proportion of immigrants (46%) but with a small Latin American population (approx. 1.5% of the total population), and in comparison with cities such as Toronto and Montreal, with a small and newer Colombian community. The typical profile of Colombian immigrant tends to be that they entered through the economic entrance class. There is also a large number of government sponsored refugees who arrived after 2001 and show greater diversity in terms of educational, occupational and regional backgrounds than previous immigrants (Immigrant Service Society, 2006).

In 1996, Colombians formed the Colombian Canadian Community Association of British Columbia which sought to support "integration of the Colombian community in British Columbia." The association promotes the celebration of national holidays (independence, religious holidays) and functions as an information network on employment and community events (through a newsletter and a web page). Participation in the association has been mainly by professionals who arrived as economic immigrants. The participation of refugees is low and this is explained by a past leader of the Association as the result of a mutual distrust and an implicit hierarchy between those who arrived as economic immigrants and those who came under the refugee class. As a result, refugees in Vancouver have encountered an unreceptive reception and weak solidarity from the Colombian community. In the case of refugees, interviews and fieldwork indicate that fear is also heightened by the anxiety experienced in trying to understand the complex system, working with fragmented information on their entitlements in Canada and the programs and resources available to new immigrants and refugees, and the role of the state and settlement organizations in the organization and control of their daily life.[22]

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[20] Refugee man, Memory workshop Vancouver, November 2004

[21] Refugee woman, Memory workshop Vancouver, September 2004

[22] In the case of Vancouver, 82% of Colombians granted protection by Canada between 2000 and 2005 arrived as government assisted refugees and received initial settlement assistance under the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) of the Government of Canada (CIC, 2005). A local immigrant settlement organization is contracted out to provide support and orientation during this initial phase. The support received, however, is limited as the mandate of these agencies is to provide up to 16 hours of support per

An absence of solidarity and support for newly arrived refugees may also be associated with the characteristics of the Colombian community which is relatively new and does not have a group of older refugees or solidarity groups that can play a more active cultural bridging role.

This weak social cohesion has implications for the participation of Colombians in multi-local activities directed to peacebuilding or development in the country of origin. An important number of those who came as refugees from Colombia were actively engaged in a human rights, protection, community work or political action in sectors as diverse as non governmental organizations, local and national government, unions and community organizations. Among Vancouver's group of refugees who arrived in the last five years and participated in interviews or workshops conducted for the research on Forced Migration of Colombians, most had institutional or personal linkages that provided them with the information or contacts for making a refugee claim. As well, several of these refugees currently maintain translocal and long distance relations that keep them in contact with their country and city of origin through networks of information sharing and in some cases through activities of solidarity and defense of human rights. In a few cases, they had been involved in solidarity tours within Canada speaking on the human rights situation in Colombia. These linkages however, have not translated into an organized process of political engagement as they are not locally articulated within specific social networks or organizations. The highly demanding process of settlement in Canada and the nature of a refugee settlement program characterized by the fragmentation of information, intense institutionally bound relations and a weak presence of country or regionally based networks curtail an active transnationalism and create a disconnection between a very localized and isolated process of incorporation in the new country and the transnational actions or linkages that keep refugees in contact with home.

In the city of Sherbrooke in Quebec, there is also an association of Colombians, the Cultural Association of Colombians in the Estrie, *Colombiestrie*, but with a different history and profile.[23] Immigrants in Sherbrooke, in contrast with Vancouver, represent only a 4.6% of the total population. Since 2001, Colombians constitute the main source of refugees to this city (followed by Afghanistan) and the first large Latin American group to settle in this region (Osorio, 2006). The social networks of Colombians in Sherbrooke show greater social cohesion than those observed in Vancouver. This is the result of a number of factors but mainly of the formation of a Colombian association that established as its main goal the development of trust among Colombians and the support

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case. Settlement workers operate under a refugee resettlement program that limits the number of hours they spend supporting refugees, and requires them to demonstrate tangible outcomes from their interventions. This reduces their ability to provide comprehensive support and follow up. It also limits their ability to facilitate an understanding of the vast amount of information given to the refugee. Refugees thus face a difficult situation in accessing resources that can adequately address the vulnerable situation in which most Colombians arrive. As a result, new immigrants spent significant amounts of time trying to navigate through the settlement system and understanding government programs and entitlements.

[23] Research in Sherbrooke has been coordinated by Amantina Osorio (University of Montreal), a research associate with the project on Forced Migration of Colombians.

to their incorporation process. The association was formed after a period of tension and infighting within the community. The arrival of refugees with diverse educational background, regions of origin, political affiliations and causes of forced migration activated local tensions, distrust and fear among Colombians.[24]

Tensions around political or ideological affinities derived in open aggression and conflict. Local intercultural organizations (Recontre Interculturel des Familles de l'Estrie) and the social work department of the University of Sherbrooke intervened and started a process of cultural mediation. These are institutions recognized by the immigrant community, and Colombians responded to their invitation to participate in a series of workshops. The sessions highlighted the distrust, silences and traumatic experiences of loss among Colombian refugees and concluded with the idea of creating an association that will focus on building trust and support local incorporation. Although discussions were conducted on whether the organization should consider solidarity actions and engagement with Colombia, it was decided that priority should be placed on building trust, strengthening the community and on local integration.

The human and political capital of those who came to the association and the ongoing support and accompaniment by local intercultural organizations provided a solid ground for organizing. The association has coordinated large scale cultural and social activities and is engaged in civic and political initiatives around immigrant incorporation. It participates in the discussion of a municipal plan of action for the welcoming and settlement of immigrants in Sherbrooke[25] and has become a key player in discussions pertaining to immigrant incorporation, and intercultural and equity issues. The association is also playing a bridging role welcoming and accompanying refugees who arrive in the city and last year organized a series of solidarity actions to support a Colombian family whose refugee claim had been denied and was to be deported back to Colombia. In this frame of action, the "politics of home" and discussions about the situation in Colombia continue to be avoided and the actions of social mobilization coordinated by the association do not address the conflict at home, peace building or development. This strategy is similar to that taken by other Colombian organizations in Quebec which, as research conducted by Arsenault (2006) indicates, have opted to erase "political issues" as topic for discussion. The implications of this strategy are far reaching when considering the potential of these groups to impact on peace building and development. The case of Sherbrooke, however, suggests the importance of consolidating processes of social cohesion among communities in exile who live with a legacy of violence that creates a crisis of trust and undermine efforts to engage in long lasting initiatives with their country of origin.

[24] Interview with the ex-president of Colombiestrie conducted by Amantina Osorio.
[25] Sherbrooke is the first city in Quebec to adopt an immigrant welcome and integration policy. The city as well as Quebec City and Gatineau were selected for regionalized immigration.

Conclusion: Challenges to diaspora involvement in peace building

Colombian-led transnational initiatives have been conducted by small, relatively informal, networks of activists with episodic collaboration with Canadian civil society actors. They have focused on refugee rights, denouncing human rights violations in Colombia, educating the Canadian public, and lobbying Canadian authorities. However, these initiatives have not led to the consolidation of a coherent, widely accepted approach to Colombian solidarity for several reasons. These include the ongoing nature of the conflict in Colombia; diverse interpretations of the conflict, which make it difficult to find approaches with widespread support; tensions between Colombian-led and Canadian-led solidarity efforts; and deep social divisions and mistrust among Colombians in Canada. These processes and the ad-hoc quality of solidarity transnationalism reflect a particular stance vis-à-vis the position being negotiated by solidarity activists in Colombia. They are participating in a particular version of peace building and development in Colombia, but it is not a version that is recognized by the Colombian state, in part because of the way the state frames the violence, obscuring its own role, and in part because peace-building there is conducted separately with different parties, none of which include Colombians abroad.

We suggest that the ad-hoc quality and adversarial or critical stance of Colombians' solidarity- oriented transnational engagement calls into question the extent to which it is possible to generalize or reproduce the emerging paradigm of diaspora involvement in peace building and development. This paradigm presupposes a relatively coherent "diaspora," something conspicuously absent in the Colombian case. The model also seems to assume that peace building occurs post-conflict, and that development is managed by a legitimate state. In cases of conflict, the conflict is usually framed as bi-polar, with the opposing group controlling territory and established organizations that can carry out development activities. Again, the Colombian case does not fit these scenarios, at least not at present. We are left to conclude that either the activities of Colombian solidarity activists constitute a form of peace building that relies on mobilizing international pressure so as to foster social change and support human rights, and then peace building needs to be re-conceptualized more broadly, or there is little probability that Colombians will be involved in peace building and development in the near future.

The cases reviewed illustrate the forms of mobilization and tensions that influence how Colombians in Canada negotiate their relationships with their place of origin and their various understandings of the conflict and peace building. We conclude this section with a summary of the various factors that mediate these forms of engagement and the factors that impact or hinder a more coordinated or effective social mobilization.

The conflict is ongoing, complex and plural

Colombia continues to suffer an internal conflict that impacts seriously on the civilian population. While negotiations and a peace process have been advanced with the paramilitary and are taking place with the National Liberation Army, the negotiation with the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia has not advanced beyond an initial

agreement by both the government and the guerrilla to hold conversations on a humanitarian exchange of prisoners. The divisions and polarizations of Colombians around the various sides of the conflict are clearly reflected in the varying positions about advancing a negotiated solution to the conflict with each of the armed fractions; the role of civil society at the negotiating table; and the implementation of a Justice and Peace Law under which the National Reparations and Reconciliation Commission was established. As a recent report on an international conference on peace initiatives in Colombia stated, "[i]n Colombia it is difficult even to find a language to speak of peace—let alone arrive at a consensus about what it means to get there." (Bouvier, 2006:16). The multi-polar nature of the conflict, the plurality of violences that it mobilizes (political, drug related, everyday and criminal violence) and the varying positions about what constitutes effective peace making and peace building challenge attempts to understand peace making in Colombia as a singular and two sided process. The experiences of transnational solidarity groups in the GTA highlight the important role of Colombian civil actors and social movements are playing in consolidating peace building initiatives at local and regional levels and the complementary role that international actors and Colombians in the diaspora may take in supporting these processes. However, they can only play a supportive or complementary role in a broader process with a host of other more powerful institutional actors. It also suggests that peace building demands the democratic involvement of civil society at the local, regional and national level and the advancement of a variety of initiatives that may support local development and the strengthening of citizenship's initiative for a peaceful coexistence.

Fragmented alliances with Canadian actors, changing alliances

The legacy of the conflict in Colombia has also had effects on relations between Colombian- and Canadian-led solidarity. Colombian and Canadian groups working on human rights and solidarity have constructed different networks of interlocution with groups in Colombia based on their interests, priorities and interpretations of the conflict. Canadian church groups tend to work with church and human rights groups, and Canadian unions with Colombian unions and rights groups. Colombian solidarity groups have worked with Canadian civil society groups on some projects, but at times, divergent ideas about whom to work with in Colombia have led to divisions. Differences have also arisen among Colombians based on divergent views of the conflict. The lack of durable alliances between Colombian and Canadian-led solidarity has fragmented what could otherwise be a stronger, more consolidated, and widely adhered to set of positions in solidarity, advocacy and peace building for Colombia.

Fear and distrust as source of fragmentation and division

The legacy of a four decades long conflict on the social fabric of communities and social relations of Colombians continues to be felt during the migration process and in the efforts of Colombians abroad to come together and form associations regardless of their aim. Our research in several Canadian cities supports previous findings from research

conducted in Canada, the United States, Ecuador and Colombia that stresses the lasting impact that a crisis of trust is having on Colombians and its effect upon the exercise of politics and the ways membership in the country of origin is negotiated. Support to communities in the diaspora in a country like Canada needs to address how policies of settlement and integration and initiatives to support the role of diasporas in peace building and development may foster social cohesion and conflict resolution within the communities themselves.

Immediate needs of settlement

The Colombian community is a relatively recent community in Canada and this influences the actions and strategies they develop to establish a relationship with their homeland. The more established, larger and older communities of Colombians are in Toronto and Montreal, places where there is a longer history of transnational organizing by some members of these communities. Our observation is that at this stage in the process of Colombians' settlement and incorporation in Canada, immediate settlement needs consume and demand large amounts of their time and energy. The development of organizations aimed at improving incorporation is a response to these needs and may indicate that most Colombians see Canada as a permanent place of residence and do not aim to return home if and when the situation changes. As indicated, the fragmentation of information on settlement and incorporation in Canada and the limited time and resources that settlement agencies have to support immigrants and refugees during the early years of settlement also hinder efforts at broader political engagements. It is possible that as the community becomes more established in Canada, more coordinated initiatives of transnational engagement may emerge.

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Capacity Building for Peace and Development
A Potential Role for the Colombian Diaspora

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Overview

There was a moment of discomfort among the team due to the fact that participation in the community was not immediate. We did make an extra effort initially in order to attract participants. However, as the media and other organizations in the community got involved and more people knew about these work things evolved quickly. And this is a perfect moment to thank all the media, web pages and community sources that helped us.

After re-scheduling a couple of dates, seven workshops took place among all the focus group previously defined. Besides the activity of filling the surveys, a special dialogue took place at the end of each meeting. From those conversations, we can extract that: a) Colombians love their country enormously, but this emotional expression does not always translate into action, b) There is a common feeling of lack of unity, c) Many Colombians have not settled themselves yet in Canada due to the fact that they are constantly thinking of returning; d) Many are in the process of learning about the Canadian system and do not understand that some actions may impact that process, for example intra-familiar violence, e) The first years are dedicated to settlement and adaptation, that is why it is difficult for them to participate in community activities, here and in support of Colombia, f) The main difficulties faced by most is the language barrier, the learning process, the cold weather, job search and previous academic credentials recognition; this final point being the major cause of emotional distress g) A large number of participants believe that it is necessary to work together in a common project; nevertheless, there are no venues or projects that place incentive on such action. Thus, they believe that to be able to join any initiative, understandable and clear conditions must be part of it. h) Another important point made again and again is that Colombians do not trust others easily and they need to see credible actions after fifty years of promises. And most believe that the corruption is a common life style back in their country, which must be eradicated totally in order to participate in a project with the potential for success. i) Almost unanimously, participants believe that the main task that every Colombian in the Diaspora must perform is to create a positive image about Colombia; telling

a different story than the one shown by the mass media.

A final thought by one of the participant was: "We did not leave Colombia…we brought Colombia with us".

Colombian Diaspora in Canada

Theories of Immigration

The Colombian community in Toronto has grown considerably since the late 1980's to the present. It is important to place into framework what are the main reasons why people choose to migrate; thus the importance of theoretical foundations of immigration.

Since within this current there are many contending theories, this report will concentrate on the theoretical framework that has been posited by Castles and Miller (1993). The main reason for this decision is that in their work, the authors surround the issue of international immigration with a specific focus on ethnic migration, thus creating a direct relation between Colombians as an ethnic minority and Canada as a nation, nation-state, and spatial representation.

International immigration, although not a recent phenomenon, has become a topic of contention both in sending and receiving countries; and although the situations in sending countries are noteworthy, this area of the debate will be discussed within the context of international immigration, and specifically contemporary Colombian immigration to Canada.

According to Castles and Miller, international immigration can be identified within four general tendencies:

1. **Globalization of Migration**
   This tendency works on the idea that more and more countries at the same time are continuing to be affected by migratory movements. Moreover, the areas where people are emigrating from have expanded, meaning that immigration countries have to contend with diverse populations with different cultures, languages, and economic backgrounds.

2. **Acceleration of Migration**
   Migration levels are rising in volume in all major regions of the world.

3. **Differentiation of Migration**
   Most countries of immigration differ in how immigrants are categorized. For example, labour migration, refugee, or permanent resident. This category posits a chain of migration, where one type of immigrant begins to arrive in a given country, after to be followed by a different type of immigrant from the same country and/or region.

4. **Feminization of Migration**
   In contemporary migration patterns, women are continuously playing an increasing role. This is opposed to traditional migration, where men seen as sole breadwinners were the first, or sometimes the only one to migrate
   (Castles and Miller, 1993).

This report, in its reference between immigration and identity, will place emphasis on the third migratory tendency (differentiation of migration). The reason for this is that many Colombian immigrants decide to migrate and remain in Canada for an undetermined length of time since many arrived either as refugees or within the skilled worker class (Citizenship and Immigration Canada policy) creating a new beginning, thus making the decision to remain for an undetermined amount of time. Moreover, settlement is also occurring where families are

united and/or re-united, an idea that will be further analyzed.

Historical Background

Beginning in the late 19th Century, Colombia has gone through a prolonged period of instability, beginning with the conflict between the Liberal and Conservative parties (Moser and McIlwaine, 2004: 41), the main political parties of the time. The contemporary conflict is said to have its roots beginning in 1948, specifically with the assassination of Jorge Elierer Gaitan on April 9, 1948 (Sanchez, 2001), a popular leader that challenged the Colombian government of the time. The violence that erupted has since invaded all aspects of private and public spheres. This violence has become an integral part of Colombian life both at the political and civil society levels (Sanchez, 2001: 1) during the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st Centuries.

Within the past twenty years Colombia has gone through the attempt at transforming itself. Within this attempt, the dynamics that interplay can be said to be twofold. Firstly, the attempt to stabilize and thrust what Sanchez refers to as the "relegitimation and strengthening of the state under the ethos of participation, citizenship, and ethnic and cultural pluralism delineated in the 1991 Constitution" (2001: 2). Secondly, the growing predominance in the logic of war, where different social, military, and private actors within Colombian society invoke the 'idea' of what Colombia as a nation-state should be. Within this

second dynamic, Sanchez puts forth the idea of the "multiplicity of violence" (2001: 3), where the violent struggle in Colombia is multi-faceted, where government, organized crime, guerrillas, self-defence groups (also referred to as paramilitaries), and street gangs and common criminals to a lesser extent all contribute to the increasing violence. At the same time, the violence can be said to be multi-layered since within each category aforementioned there exists several groups vying for, be it legitimate (e.g. political parties) or illegitimate (e.g. organized crime, self-defence groups, and guerrillas) power.

Within Colombian history, two principal processes of colonization have greatly have affected the country. The first half of the 20th Century saw the Antique□o coffee colonization, which acted as a transforming and integrating force that facilitated the growth of a middle peasantry (i.e. small land owners) and made possible the link between the Colombian economy and the international markets. The second half of the 20th Century is referred to be as the 'colonization of the contemporary era' permeated by guerrilla and paramilitary activity combined with drug cultivation and processing (Sanchez, 2001: 3) has destabilized Colombia since the late 1970's.

Since the 1980's the guerrillas' such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), National Liberation Army (ELN), Quintin Lame, and the Ejercito Popular de Liberacion (EPL), as well as self-defence groups as its main actors

(Moser and McIlwaine, 2004: 42) have polarized and terrorized communities within large regions of the country such as the *Uraba* and *Magdalena Medio* regions (close to the border with Panama) where both actors have forced union leaders to take sides. At the same time the oil rich regions of *Santander*, *Arauca*, and *Casamare* (all close to the border with Venezuela) have been turned into sources of financing by the aforementioned self-defence groups (Sanchez, 2001: 4).

From the late 1980's the violence that was once for the most part relegated to rural areas began to be felt in major urban areas such as *Bogota*, *Cali*, and *Medellin*. This phenomenon added a new dimension to the violence in Colombia, where:

i. 'Narcoterrorism' and *Sicarios* (hired killers) roam in such cities as *Medellin* and *Cali*;
ii. Implantation of 'popular militias' in poor neighbourhoods of big cities, for example, *Ciudad Bolivar* in *Bogota*, where these groups frequently, though not necessarily linked with guerrillas initially operate (with the complacency of the inhabitants) to eliminate the gangs that exist in such neighbourhoods; and
iii. The practicing of 'social cleansing' that have for the most part been allegedly performed by police or ex-police agents against beggars, prostitutes, and street delinquents in *Cali*, *Medellin*, *Pereira*, or *Barranquilla* (Sanchez, 2001: 10).

The different self-defence groups cannot be equated with 'death squads' in major urban centres, whose major concerns are the 'socially excluded'

such as prostitutes and beggars. The raison d'être for paramilitary groups is the struggle against the guerrillas (Cubides, 2001: 130), where many of these groups adopt methods and organizational techniques favoured by guerrillas'. These self-defence groups began as groups throughout rural Colombia, and were initially protected under law 48 passed in 1968, which enabled their existence, however, these actors lost all protection by the subsequent revoking of law 48 in 1979 (Cubides, 2001: 131). The revoking of law 48 however, did not stop nor prevent new self-defence groups from forming. One of the main points that Cubides posits is the interchangeability between self-defence groups and guerrilla fighters and in some cases, its own leaders. For example, *Marcelino Panesso* deserter from the FARC became the right hand man of Jose Carlos Rodriguez Gacha (one of the co-founders of the *Medellin* cartel and its leader in *Bogota*)(Cubides, 2001: 108), where he also played a role in the creating of self-defence groups tied to the drug cartels.

Colombia: A Recent History

Luis Alberto Restrepo (2001), the founder of the journal *Sintesis: Anuario Social, Politica y Economico* makes an important distinction between the culture of violence that Colombia is said to comprise and a culture of "social indifference" towards violence (Restrepo, 2001: 98), where external actors (i.e. guerrillas, paramilitary groups, and drug cartels) have appropriated the public sphere. This sphere is referent when delineating

how Colombia is viewed not only by its citizens, but by the outside world. One of the main reasons for this social indifference is that:

> "The majority of Colombians are not conscious of being part of a single people, called upon to share a common, inescapable destiny. Rather, in Colombia there have co-existed many parallel societies that, until recently survived side by side, attempting not to come into contact with one another" (Restrepo, 2001: 98).

This view restricts a culture of violence since violence is a result of what may be regarded as xenophobia, whereby external violence has created an aura of tension between Colombians that are not involved in or take part in any aspect of violence. Within this area, the idea of human rights has also become, to many extents irrelevant. Restrepo posits that human rights, along with kidnappings, disappearances, and assassination have become a natural means of resolving conflict in Colombia, it is viewed as restoring the social balance (Restrepo, 2001: 99).

By the 1980's, Latin America had shifted from dictatorships to highly unstable and debt ridden democracies (Castles and Miller, 1993: 3). Colombia, regarded as Latin America's most stable democracy (as alluded to earlier), began to enter a period of further instability with violence penetrating medium and large urban centres. Due to the growing instability and insecurity many Colombians began to immigrate.

Immigrants that decide to settle in a country oftentimes are distinct from the majority population in a number of ways; for example, traditions, customs, ideas, and sometimes language and

religion. Distinctions between immigrants and the host population are at many times socio-economic. Many migrant groups often become concentrated in certain types of work, which are generally in the low socio-economic status, and live in low income areas, segregated from the rest of the population. On the other hand, many immigrants that are well trained professionals following years of settlement and adaptation tend to integrate into society and gain employment in their fields of specialization (survey developed for the International Conference for Peace and Development at Toronto). This isolation can, at times, lead to the appearance that immigrant minorities are threatening to the established society, because when conditions change and people have to adjust to different and unpredictable situations, those newly arrived are often seen as the cause of instability and/or insecurity (Castles and Miller, 1993: 13).

Cases of insecurity and/or instability can lead to a more serious concern - that of the changing culture and identity of a given society. Castles and Miller concur with Ernest Gellner (1983) and Eric Hobsbawm (1990) that the nation-state, as it has developed since the eighteenth century exists on the premise that the nation-state is represented on the idea that it is both a cultural and political unit (Castles and Miller, 1993: 14). Therefore, insecurity and/or instability on the idea of a changing nation-state, can instil a fear (xenophobia) in the general population about how immigrants can or will alter (usually, altering is seen through a

negative lens) the nation-state. Ethnic (nation) homogeneity is usually defined in terms of a common language, culture, traditions; in other words a common genealogical history that binds a group of people together, all placed under a political unit (nation-state) is oftentimes a fictitious construction (Castles and Miller, 1993: 14) of the those in power in order to create the cohesion a nation-state 'needs'. Immigration and ethnic diversity directly challenge and threaten the idea of the nation and nation-state since immigrants are not part of what are perceived to be common beginnings. A paradox becomes evident when analysing classical countries of immigration such as Canada, the United States, and Australia, which have been able to cope with a large influx of immigrants, since the incorporation of immigrants, have been part of their myth of nation building (Castles and Miller, 1993).

Many immigrants, consciously or unconsciously, settle in a receiving country. The decision to remain is one that plays itself out in a long process. The reason for this process is that it is not only the first generation that is affected, but also subsequent generations are also affected by the migratory process (Castles and Miller, 1993: 18). Later generations begin to define themselves in different forms. For example, identification with the host country, country of parental origin, or a combination of both affects the socialization process in a number of ways; the most significant factor being the adaptation and/or integration of

second, third, and so on generations into greater society.

Factors of Immigration

The above explanation has its roots in traditional theories of immigration. These theories are often referred to as 'push-pull' theories (Castles and Miller, 1993), where there are 'push factors' such as demographic growth, low living standards, and lack of economic opportunities that entice a group of people to emigrate from their areas of origin. They are attracted by 'pull factors' such as demand for labour, availability of land, and good economic opportunities. These (traditional) theories tend to be individualistic and ahistorical, since they place emphasis on the immigrant's decision to be based on a rational comparison between costs and benefits of remaining in their area of origin or to take a look at various alternative decisions (Castles and Miller, 1993: 20). This has been mostly dismissed, since as it has been discussed earlier; decisions to migrate are mostly related to links between immigrants and segments of the population in their country of origin. At the same time, there is also a gap in this theory, specifically when speaking about refugees and migrants from war torn countries such as Colombia, where people decide where to go most of the time depending on the country that has opened its doors.

From Migration to Transnationalism

An important aspect of immigration is spatial availability. Increased immigration raises the question of urban diversity and how

relationships between receiving societies and specific immigrants groups interact not only with each other, but also with the dominant population (Veronis, 2006: 11). With an increased diversity, the concept of transnationalism begins to play an important role. Transnationalism in effect concerns itself with the web of relationships that are built between immigrants and their 'national homeland' (Brubaker, 1996). It is the study of networks over two nation-states (Veronis, 2006: 11), where a new fluidity between citizens of one country, their practices, and influence on and in their country of origin.

The question of national identity, as outlined above raises important topics when relating a nation-state to the way it attracts (or not) immigrants, as well as its laws and policies on the integration (or not) of immigrants. The formation of ethnic groups (a group can only be considered to be 'ethnic' outside of what Brubaker refers to as their 'national homeland') can take different forms; again this depends also on the attitudes of the receiving country. At one extreme, a country can be open, or actually entice immigration, grant naturalization, and a gradual acceptance and integration (not the same as tolerance) of cultural diversity, which foments the creation, and development of ethnic communities. At the other extreme, there is the denial that immigration is a fact of life, which at times leads to the refusal of granting citizenship and rights to immigrant settlers; all this combined with the rejection of cultural

diversity may lead to the creation of ethnic minorities who are regarded as undesirable and/or divisive (Castles and Miller, 1993: 26), and as explained earlier creating an sense of instability and/or security.

The question of citizenship is also at the heart of the discussion between immigration and its impact on national identity. Membership in any group is qualified by a certain status. In the nation-state, citizenship serves as an important status within society; it provides rights and duties, which at the same time are withheld from non-citizens, in turn defining an important form of exclusion. Hence, citizenship is an essential link between nation and state, a connection that is of central importance (Castles and Miller, 1993: 26) for immigrants in a nation-state.

Citizenship as a form of membership raises a second point that is both particular and multi-faceted, that of older minorities. The existence of older minorities, for example, East and South Asians, helped to mould and develop current social structures and values that both hindered and facilitated the determination of now new immigrants groups would integrate.

The decision to migrate is directly related to the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973) that is accumulated by people residing in a specific socio-cultural space, thus the decision to migrate to one country over another. Within this context, Canada as a classical country of immigration has

received four waves of Latin American immigrants beginning in the late 1950's:

Table 1.1: Waves of Latin American Immigration to Toronto

Waves of Immigration	Time Period	Demographic Characteristics
'Lead' Wave	1956-1965	• South Americans of European decent: urban intelligentsia from major Latin American cities.
	1965-1969	• Venezuelans, Argentines, and Peruvians: mostly blue-collar groups.
Andean wave	1973-1975	• Colombians, Ecuadorians, and Peruvians (economic refugees) were admitted in higher proportions. • High estimates of illegals from Peru and Guatemala. • Mostly blue-collar groups; skilled and unskilled labourers.
Coup wave	1973/74- 1978/79	• Chileans, Argentines, and Uruguayans. Chilean intelligentsia, professionals, and skilled labourers.
Central American wave	1983- Present	• Salvadorians and Guatemalans: mostly urban poor, rural middle class and peasantry. • Lower average educational levels than the Lead or Coup

		waves, and perhaps little less specialization than the Andean wave.
New wave of professional immigrants	1990's- Present	• Professionals ("skilled workers" and "business class" immigrants from throughout Latin America.

Source: Data from Fernando Mata in Veronis (2006)

As a result, Colombians (and many Latin Americans) have created an atmosphere in Toronto where both the social and cultural capital necessary to have the capabilities to integrate has opened a gateway for new Colombian immigrants to choose Canada, and specifically Toronto. This is supported by our survey and can be further proven by the numbers of Colombians choosing Toronto as a place of residence. The 2001 Canadian census shows that out of 15865 Colombians, 7780 live in Ontario, with 5615 of those choosing Toronto as their place of residence (Statistics Canada in Veronis, 2006).

Transnational connections between Colombians in Canada and their social and cultural networks in their country of origin have developed for more than thirty years. These connections have created the atmosphere for many Colombians to migrate following the wave of violence that began affecting major urban areas in Colombian beginning in the late 1980's. There is the need to continue and fully study the causes of violence, how it affects Colombians in Canada (and other countries), how these external causes play out within a Canadian

context since after all social and cultural capital is developed through reciprocity between different actors.

The Field Work

Methodology

The research methodology for this report is based on different sources and techniques: secondary sources (e.g. scholarly literature, journals, and the internet), interviews, focus groups all performed in Toronto. In total, forty people participated in the focus groups of this preliminary study. Participants were contacted via email, Internet groups, telephone, personal, and institutional contacts throughout the Colombian community in Toronto, while at the same time, the snowball method of research was also employed. Both qualitative and quantitative sources are essential to the work. The qualitative aspect is considered more profoundly, though statistical sources did play an important role in the research process. In this sense, as is becoming more and more common in improved research on international migration. Finally, all translations from texts and interviews were performed in concert by the authors of this study.

In total:

- 153 email contacts were addressed
- Internet groups or Web host:
- Yahoo Groups: Total Membership: 1800. Approximate number of Colombians: 450
- Factor Hispano: Total Membership: 650. Approximate number of Colombians: 280

- Consulate General of Colombia: Total membership: 18000
- Hispanic Development Council: Total organizational membership: 65
- Citizenship committee of Colombia: Total organizational membership: 22
- Colombians in london.com Total membership: 400
- Romero House Refugee Centre: Total membership: 40
- www.colombiaencanada.ca
- www.colombianosenlondon.com
- Radio: Voces Latinas
- RCI-Radio Canada International: Interviews about preliminary study
- Print media article on El Correo Canadiense

Conclusions of the field Work

Life in Canada

One of the most important aspects of the Colombian Diaspora has to do with the diversity of the Community in Canada. To a great extent this has to do with Colombia itself in terms of its history and spatial geographical characteristics as a county of origin. Nevertheless, following the results of our research, we could observe and confirm a significant element which has to do with the high numbers of Colombians in Canada who come from the Central region of the country which includes the cities of Bogotá, Cali, and Medellin 47.5%. The implications of this number is that considering that Colombia is a large country, the numbers of Colombians in Canada comes significantly from the above mentioned population triangle. One important element of this population is that in general includes urban sectors generally considered part of the Colombian middle class, and as a group in recent years has had increasingly to deal with the impact of the war, particularly so as the conflict has become increasingly an urban phenomenon.

Incidentally, among these newcomers to Canada, becomes interesting to notice the fact that once here, a significant number have had, at least in the professional field, some continuing in areas of employment and type of work. For example, 36 % have indicated they have professional activities related to those they had back in Colombia, while 25% have mentioned they are homeowners here in the Toronto region. In general this presents an outlook fairly positive; however in the actual employment side 44 % of the community is currently unemployed while a significant number of the community in their average of 4.5 years of residence in Canada have received social assistance. Indeed, 58% of community members indicated they had received social assistance.

In terms of challenges of adaptation to life in Canada by the Colombian community, this particular research indicates that a significant number of people have had difficulties with learning the language. Indeed, for most Colombians their feeling is that the language issue has been the most difficult in terms of adaptation to life in Canada although today more than 70% of the community indicate their capacity to communicate with comfort in English. The other two key problems identified as barriers to adaptation include finding appropriate employment, and the issue common to many recent immigrants to Canada, the recognition of academic credentials which is regularly considered the largest obstacle among what Fernando Mata has called the “professional

immigrant wave" or known in the community as well as the "IT wave". Significantly, 65% of the respondents indicated having university education prior to coming to Canada.

As we mentioned earlier, the new Colombian Community (referent to the professional wave) is a new community here having an average of 4.5 years in the country. Largely, the community feels optimistic about the future despite current levels of unemployment in Canada or problems in the home country. A feeling emerging from consultations and public discussions was a strong sense that Canadian institutions are responsive and high levels of recognition among the community. This is a very key element as it creates an emerging feeling of safety and invites people to feel confident not only personally in the future but also in the sense that actually recognizes potentialities in the Canadian arrangement as it reflects certain recognition towards the collective in the public sphere and may empower replication abroad. Interestingly, commentary of project participants include elements of their location in Canada as one reason that would facilitate the development of joint community activities, strategies or the formulation of ideas in the public arena. On the other hand, it is possible to suggest that to some extent in other countries it may be not be as conducive for the Diaspora to connect in such public space because environmental support may not be as conducive. Social environment in itself is a factor to consider in looking at the development and, or creation of

problem solving mechanisms. Another interesting idea, which appeared in the public discussions about Colombia, had to do with the possible timing of any initiative developed or presented. For example, there could be more opportune or better times to work together and, or produce collective work. In other words, an assessment of the context for such work it is also a fundamental consideration. This thinking points out in the direction of the creation of some sort of "atmosphere" or "right" conditions to work or think about Colombian matters which would also help in providing a positive and probably a more safe environment for public discussions.

Participants in the research process expressed strong interest in responding, but also there was a clear attitude towards responding objectively the questions presented by the research team. In essence, this simple act, in occasions was considered a significant piece already to the contribution towards "helping" Colombia in its turmoil. As mentioned elsewhere, aside from the fact that people in the Diaspora were generous in the reception to this research, clearly in some circumstances this was also a challenge as there are wounds caused by the conflict and there are persons who see its impact as a present and ongoing cause for personal anguish. Yet, as the research progressed, and considering that the length of time for this work was rather reduced, many individuals offered their interest, support, and assistance in a way that was very positive towards the possibility

of searching for ways to contribute. A potential good explanation for the latter might be the fact that more than 80% of respondents indicated that they had still ties to the country because of family relations, and they keep themselves informed as to the developments in the country in about 80% of the times.

Among Colombians, the discussion about the Diaspora itself is an important fact. Publicly and in private there are many ideas about this important topic. As it has been expressed, Colombians are happy to express their opinions and are generally open to conversation, yet at times there is a sense of strong frustration for more than fifty years of conflict about which many in the community they felt they had to endure and to a great extent survive. Hence, at this particular juncture it is important to examine information regarding public attitudes and political culture among the community, and for starters perhaps mention that there has been some sort of sustained internal solidarity despite regular statements of scepticism and lack of confidence in fellow Colombians and Colombian institutions. For example the large majority of respondents in our research expressed interest in participating in electoral processes while an even larger number expressed their view that actually Colombia is in the middle of a war, 82.5%. From the researchers perspective this was a very important question and answer since one of the most often heard comments is that in Colombia “not much happens” and that the political questions are not often addressed, living

external community observers with the impression of having a community that is rather content with the "status quo". The responses of the participants clearly demonstrated the opposite.

The Problematique

Colombian Canadians have expressed clearly their understanding regarding the problems of Colombia in the direction of failing institutions and stemming therefore the problems of violence and war. In terms of definition of the problem, the number one response from Colombian Canadians is systemic corruption among leading institutions of the country. As it was explained in the first part of this research, multi-layered violence connected to an array of groups vying for power and attempting to build legitimacy among the national institutions, have left large segments of the population excluded from participating in properly channelled social and political processes having to do with the national issues of building institutions responsive to the citizenry of the country. Within this context for Colombians in Canada, the ensuing military strife is the outcome of such struggle for power, while individual citizens attempt to cope with the logic of becoming spectators of the conflict. Migration for some has been some sort of solution, at least in the area of personal security for those who felt the only way to survive was migrating to a safe place like Canada and here they attempt to build some sense of normality. For many Colombians another element of this conflict is provided also by a degree

of social imbalance and social stratification resulting from a class structure in the old country that is traditional and unable to find new alternatives to deal with a fifty-year-old problem. In other words, there is a sense that traditional elites have stagnated and have not responded to the contemporary challenges raised by the more mobile middle professional class. Many respondents and participants of focus groups clearly identified the "government" and the current governance system as incapable to respond to the outlined challenge and to a great extent expressed grief and frustration for the seemingly locked conflict. An expression of the frustration and a sense of hopelessness is the fact that many responded that they would not consider to go back to Colombia. In effect, 75% responded that they would not return to Colombia because of uncertainty, lack of safety and the collapse of the rule of law in the country. Another important element of this seemingly lack of interest had to do with the degree of retention by Canada of the Colombian population here. As a matter of fact, a significant number of respondents indicated that they were feeling already settled here, and therefore moving back would be a difficult decision.

But yet, even if there is a strong sense of discontent, is there a role for the Colombian Diaspora to contribute to the problem solving and peace building in that country? In general the answer is yes and goes from moderate to high interest 80% of the cases. Given that there are many elements that hampered the current relationship

with the country of origin such as lack of organizations, resources, specific opportunities to contribute, information or relatively small experience in the matter, still there is a sense of interest to participate if the conditions and motivation were right. For instance, from appropriate institutional support and the evolution of a trustworthy leadership, including resources such as time, logistics and information would provide incentives for the participation of the community here in Canada. In addition, this potential could increase if in Colombia itself there were some changes or measures that would contribute to the provision of an atmosphere of change. Among the elements identified in the latter we may include a potential cease fire, meaningful negotiations, government led by political figures with better perception in regards to corruption ties or independence, and ultimately, related to all of the above is an improvement of quality of life for the families of those residing here in Canada.

The role of the Colombian Canadian Diaspora in Building for Peace in the Homeland

As it was written in our proposal to undertake this study, this research team was committed to presenting a conclusion that would form the baseline for possible initiatives within a transnational framework regarding Colombia and the Canadian Colombian communities and will assist the dialogue on capacity building for peace and development, the roles of the diaspora and its

potential for participation on processes of engagement in peacebuilding and development. In the research process while we initially found some quite scepticism as to the task we were undertaking we were provided with a great support from many of our institutional partners as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. Undoubtedly, as the process moved quickly as to the deadlines for the provision of this report, the interest and response grew quickly, and most significantly with the interest it emerged a vision as to how this work of Diaspora engagement could grow and contribute to the process of building peace and development in Colombia. As the focus groups took place and dialogue ensued, there was an emergent view that in spite "of the community being hearing about peace for half a century and no credible conclusions", there were still opportunities to achieve progress in this field.

The research undertaken did not focus on a prescriptive paper, but rather in the exploration as to the possibilities of the community in providing some elements for building some sort of idea in the field of potential actions regarding the process in Colombia. The community response was actually decisive and clear as to the provision of how initiatives may take place and highlighted some fundamental pieces for constructing work in this area.

The first elements mentioned many times and expressed in different forms is **absence of a legitimate project or program to confront the**

historic conflict of Colombia. As expressed by many of the members of the community in Toronto, the conflict has lasted already for more than fifty years and the solution seems to be further away. The Colombian institutions have not being able to respond and we have a situation now that seems to produce more frustration and resentment. The corruption in the system is one of the largest barriers to progress and governments are falling under this circumstance while violence continues to be ever present and the amount of disruption to life and the economy of the country has continued to undermine the development of individual Colombians in the cities while we are talking about three million of displaced Colombians in the countryside. So, for many, one of the desired elements for change is the **designing of a project and a vision for the country**. However, this particular project or initiative must take place in accordance with certain framework that will facilitate first its creation and design, and then its implementation if to succeed.

The first element for the building of this project requires a fundamental resource, which is the participation of **community stakeholders that are credible and legitimate in the eyes of the community**. In other words, the framework regarding community leaders implies that they have to some extent be recognized by the Colombian community itself so that they are able to engage and represent the community at all levels. Although, there is no descriptive definition of what leadership

in this context actually entails, the cautionary note here is that of independent leadership distant from the "corruption" and interests in Colombia. In addition, it can be inferred that such leaders will have to be able to engage international institutions at all levels so as to facilitate conversations leading to the promotion of changes in the political culture and institution building within Colombia.

The third element of this initiative has to do with the actual **institution and/or organization to carry out such project**. As mentioned in the area of leadership regarding individuals, there is also a parallel element in the institutional side. More specifically, one area that also received an important degree of recognition within this consultation had to do so far with the absence of an organization in the community able to bring together the community around a vision or project. When community members were asked if they had participated in initiatives regarding Colombian issues, a significant number expressed that they had not done so because there were no Colombians' institutions able to bring together the larger community. Hence, it is clear that in the area of community organization and engagement there is still a significant element missing from an overarching perspective. Still, there is an element of caution to be presented here regarding Colombian organizations in Canada. In the Colombian community there are a series of organizations which have done work in the community for a significant number of years and have mastered authority

among its members, yet the Colombian community is suggesting very specifically that in regards to the actual issues of civic engagement, and from a more "transnational perspective" there are no organizations yet able to carry the day in representing the larger interests of the Diaspora. Among the characteristics which this "transnational organization" should have include the capacities to connect with educational institutions, churches, Foreign Affairs Colombia, Foreign Affairs Canada, the United Nations, the International Red Cross, be recognized by the private and public sector, be able to do research or connect to research institutions. In addition, one important comment that was strongly suggested is that the United Nations as an institution involved in peace and conflict resolution could make a very important contribution to the process from the perspective of Colombians abroad as a legitimate body whose support should be sought in the process. Yet, there is the perception that within Colombia itself this issue would be more contested, as the traditional structures are more resistant to entertain international proposals regarding the issues of conflict in the country.

Hence, there is clarity that Colombians feel there are possibilities for a "transnational approach" in dealing with the issues of peace building and conflict resolution in the home country, yet the actual workings of the project or initiative need to be defined in accordance with some of the conditions established above and clearly through the establishment of some sort of community process

called very likely by the diversity of leaders of institutions in the Diaspora. But most important, it is clear that contrary to some of the initial scepticism there is room for the community to come together in such overarching community project.

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Conflict-Generated Diasporas and Peacebuilding:

A Conceptual Overview and Ethiopian Case Study

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BACKGROUND PAPER – NOT FOR CITATION OR PUBLICATION

Globalization has shaped how processes of migration, exile, and the formation of diaspora and other transnational networks operate. By decreasing communication and travel costs, globalization has made it easier for migrants to form diaspora networks that link geographically distant populations to social, political, and economic developments in the homeland. Those forced across borders by conflict or repression commonly have a specific set of traumatic memories and hence create specific types of "conflict-generated diasporas" that are often key actors in homeland politics.

Conflict-generated diasporas – with their origins in violent displacement and their identities linked to symbolically important territory – often play critical roles with regard to homeland conflicts. As recent economic research has noted, diaspora remittances often sustain parties engaged in civil war.[1] Other research notes that remittances are often critical to basic survival to the most vulnerable in conflict and postconflict contexts.[2] Beyond resources, conflict-generated diasporas frequently have a particularly important role in framing conflict issues and defining what is politically acceptable. Diaspora groups created by conflict and sustained by traumatic memories tend to compromise less and therefore reinforce and exacerbate conflicts' protractedness. In some cases, such as the Ethiopian, Tamil, or Armenian diasporas, this tendency to frame the homeland

[1] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievances in Civil War," (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 2355, 2000), p. 26 argue "by far the strongest effect of war on the risk of subsequent war works through diasporas. After five years of postconflict peace, the risk of renewed conflict is around six times higher in the societies with the largest diasporas in America than in those without American diasporas. Presumably this effect works through the financial contributions of diasporas to rebel organizations."

[2] Patricia Weiss Fagan and Micah N. Bump, *Remittances in Conflict and Crisis: How Remittances Sustain Livelihoods in War, Crises, and Transitions to Peace* (New York: International Peace Academy Policy Paper, February 2006); Randolph Kent and Karin von Hippel with Mark Bradbury, *Social Facilitation, Development and the Diaspora: Support for Sustainable Health Services in Somalia* (London: International Policy Institute, Kings College, November 2004).

conflict in categorical, hard-line terms strengthens confrontational homeland leaders and organizations and undermines others seeking compromise. In other cases, diaspora groups have transformed themselves from supporters of militant elements to key partners with peacemakers, as seen in the Irish-American diaspora and the Good Friday agreements.[3] Conflict-generated diasporas therefore are often key actors in homeland politics and conflicts and may contribute either to increased polarization or new opportunities for peace.

A major challenge for conflict resolution in today's globalized world therefore is to limit diasporas' roles in exacerbating violent conflicts and reinforce their capacities for peacebuilding. This paper will explore patterns of relationships between conflict-generated diasporas and homeland conflict with particular reference to how conflicts are framed and the boundaries of legitimate political goals and strategies created and reinforced. It will use a case study of the Ethiopian diaspora in the United States to reflect the complexity of this community and the different ways that segments of the diaspora relate their identity to the homeland. Diasporas include diverse views on issues facing their homeland, thereby providing potential partners for a range of peacebuilding initiatives. The political opening and subsequent crisis in Ethiopia illustrates some of the ways this diaspora has shaped recent political developments. Finally, this paper will note several initiatives to engage the Ethiopian diaspora in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

[3] Joseph O'Grady, "An Irish Policy Born in the U.S.A.: Clinton's Break with the Past," *Foreign Affairs* 75:3 (May-June 1996): Michael Cox, "The War that Came in from the Cold: Clinton and the Irish Question," *World Policy Journal* 16:1 (Spring 1999).

Globalization and Conflict-Generated Diasporas

Emigré involvement in homeland political affairs is not new and has taken many forms over the centuries.[4] As the pace and scale of globalization has increased in recent years key political, economic, and social developments often take place outside a given state's sovereign territory. Migration is a complex process; only a small portion of migrants form diaspora networks engaged in the political affairs of their homeland. What defines a diaspora is the participation in networks engaged in activities designed to sustain homeland linkages.[5] Behavior and choice rather than abstract identity therefore are critical to determining membership in a diaspora. Conflict-generated diasporas are a particular category characterized by their displacement's source (violent, forced separation rather than relatively voluntary economic pursuits) and by the consequent nature of their homeland ties (identities emphasizing links to symbolically valuable territory).[6]

The trauma of violent displacement is vivid in the first generations' minds and is often kept alive in subsequent generations through commemorations and symbols. In fact, one function of conflict-generated diaspora networks is to ensure that displacement's original cause is remembered and the grievance passed on to the next generation.[7] In

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[4] Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Migration* (Yale University Press, 2000); Alicja Iwa□ska, *Exiled Governments: Spanish and Polish* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1981).

[5] For different perspectives on defining diasporas see William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1:1 (1991): 89-99; Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); Robin Cohen, *Global Diaspora: An Introduction* (London: University College London, 1997).

[6] Terrence Lyons, "Diasporas and Homeland Conflict," in Miles Kahler and Barbara Walter, eds., *Globalization, Territoriality, and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[7] Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1997).

contrast to many cases of economic migration where certain categories of people such as young men look for work abroad, in conflict-generated cases the initial migration was often large, rapid, and included entire extended families and villages. The central importance of conflict therefore shapes identities among certain diaspora groups in their new host country and serves as a focal point for community mobilization.

The most institutionalized and influential networks tend to develop where diasporas are of sufficient size and concentration and have sufficient time to organize. Many of the most prominent diaspora groups have a critical mass in a given host country such as Ethiopians in the United States (particularly Washington, with a large Oromo population in Minneapolis) and Germany, Kurds in Germany, Tamils in Canada and the United Kingdom, and Armenians in California. Each currently has a critical mass participating in organizations seeking to build and reinforce links between communities located in host countries to the homeland in conflict. It may be that other diaspora groups are either too dispersed or too recent to organize effectively.

Some have suggested that globalization and the development of "diasporic identities" would make territory and boundaries less salient as political, social, and economic life becomes deterritorialized.[8] Appadurai, for example, writes that "the landscapes of group identity – the ethnoscapes – around the world are no longer tightly territorialized, spatiall bounded, historically self-conscious, or culturally homogenous."[9] Rather than seeking to build a deterrorialized transnational community, however, many diaspora groups retain and amplify attachment to their identity's territorial aspect even if

[8] Östen Wahlbeck, *Kurdish Diasporas: A Comparative Study of Kurdish Refugee Communities* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1999), p. 27.
[9] Arjun Appadurai, "Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology," in Richard G. Fox, ed., *Recapturing Anthropology* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991), p. 191.

they are physically distant or unlikely to travel to that territory. A sense of solidarity and attachment to a particular locality can generate a common identity without propinquity, where territorially defined community and spatial proximity are decoupled without diminishing the salience of territoriality.[10]

The concept of territorially defined homeland is often inherent in the conflict-generated diaspora's identity and therefore serves as a focal point of diaspora political action and debate. As day-to-day activities focus on the new place of residence and as a consequence the instrumental value of territory diminishes, the homeland's symbolic importance often grows. Diaspora websites and publications emphasize the symbols of the nation state – maps, flags, symbolic geographic features, or indigenous plants and animals. Often the language of exile emphasizes the links to homeland as a very much earthly place by speaking of the "original soil" and the need to maintain "roots" in times of dispersal.[11] Since symbolic attachment is paramount to these communities, many conflict-generated diasporas oppose bargains that trade off some portion of the sacred homeland for some other goal.

Diasporas in general develop social networks both to retain identity and to promote community self-help programs for finding jobs, housing, and managing immigration issues in their new host countries. They often form religious communities, schools to maintain homeland languages and cultural practices among children, and other social clubs to celebrate religious holidays or to mark other symbolically important dates.

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[10] On symbolic territory and conflict see Monica Duffy Toft, "Indivisible Territory and Ethnic War," Cambridge: Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Working Paper no. 01-08, December 2001, p. 7. See also David Morley and Kevin Robins, "No Place like Heimat: Images of Home(land) in European Culture," in Erica Carter, James Donald, and Judith Squires, eds., *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993).

[11] Hamid Naficy, "The Poetics and Practice of Iranian Nostalgia in Exile," *Diaspora* 1:3 (Winter 1991): 285-302.

These social networks often are used to mobilize the diaspora in support of a party engaged in homeland conflict. Heroes' Day, for example, is an important day for community mobilization among the Tamil diaspora. Annual events such as the Ethiopian soccer tournament in North America bring thousands together not only to compete and socialize but also to talk politics. Furthermore, these cultural events are instrumental in socializing the generation born outside of the homeland to the issues of conflict and displacement defining their membership in a diaspora group.

A number of recent studies have focused on the question of diaspora funding for homeland insurgencies and recent concerns regarding terrorist group financing have raised this issue's policy importance. The Tamil diaspora provides critical funding to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the links between diaspora fundraising and conflict have been noted with regard to the Kurdish Workers Party, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and Croatian political and military movements.[12] Diasporas sometimes lobby host governments for increased support for states engaged in conflict, as demonstrated by the Eritrean, Armenian, and Croatian diasporas' efforts. Diaspora networks often lobby host countries, promote public education and public relations, and

[12] On the LTTE see Daniel L. Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2001). For a recent story see Christine Kearney, "U.S. Arrests Suspected Tamil Tiger Supporters," *Washington Post,* August 22, 2006, p. A9. On the PIRA see John Horgan and Max Taylor, "Playing the 'Green Card' – Financing the Provisional IRA: Part I," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11:2 (Summer 1999) and Paul Arthur, "Diasporan Intervention in International Affairs: Irish America as a Case Study," *Diaspora* 1:2 (Fall 1991). On the PKK see Michael Radu, "The Rise and Fall of the PKK," *Orbis* 45:1 (Winter 2001). On Croatia see Daphne N. Winland, "'We Are Now an Actual Nation': The Impact of National Independence on the Croatian Diaspora in Canada," *Diaspora* 4:1 (1995): 3-29.

organize demonstrations that promote their cause and keep it on the international agenda.[13]

Beyond financial flows, diasporas relate to homelands and conflict in a broad range of ways. Levitt describes "social remittances" as the "ideas, behavior, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving countries to sending country communities."[14] These non-financial transfers sometimes carry significant weight in the homeland. In many cases of authoritarianism and conflict, lack of freedom in the homeland limits space for political discussions and diaspora debates fill the vacuum. Diaspora networks therefore can serve as gatekeepers for political debates and shape which political ideas are considered legitimate in the homeland.

The emotional attachment to highly symbolic land often leads to a framing of conflict in the homeland in categorical, uncompromising terms. Benedict Anderson once characterized such diaspora groups as "long-distance nationalists" who are inherently unaccountable because they do not have to pay the price for the polarizing policies they support:

> While technically a citizen of the state in which he comfortably lives, but to which he may feel little attachment, he finds it tempting to play identity politics by participating (via propaganda, money, weapons, any way but voting) in the conflicts of his imagined Heimat [homeland] – now only fax time away. But this citizenless participation is inevitably non-responsible – our hero will not have to answer for, or pay the price of, the long-distance politics he undertakes.[15]

This point of view and the way it sets the terms of debate and strategy is quite powerful because exiles often have greater media access and the time, resources, and freedom to

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[13] For a discussion focusing of Kurds see Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, *Diasporas and Conflict Resolution – Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies Brief, March 2006).

[14] Peggy Levitt, "Social Remittances: Migration-Driven, Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion," *International Migration Review* 32:4 (Winter 1998), p. 926.

[15] Benedict Anderson, "The New World Disorder," *New Left Review* 193 (1992): 13. See also Benedict Anderson, "Exodus," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Winter 1994): 314-27.

articulate and circulate a political agenda than actors in the conflicted homeland. The cost of refusing compromise is often low (if the diaspora members are well-established in Europe, North America, or Australia) and the rewards from demonstrating steadfast commitment to the cause is high (in personal/ psychological terms but also as a mechanism of social mobilization). In some cases, leading intellectuals have sought exile to engage in political debate and campaigning. Major cultural figures frequently are based abroad and their framing of issues relating to identity, memory, and conflict powerfully resonate back home.

Given their interest in issues of particular relevance to those abroad, diaspora groups can complicate the political struggles within their homelands. As suggested by Maney in his study of transnational movements and civil rights in Northern Ireland, external supporters "not only can exacerbate problems encountered by domestic coalitions but can also introduce additional obstacles to the effective pursuit of social change."[16] Political leaders back home are often ambiguous about the political influence of those who left and emphasize symbolic issues, perceiving that they may have lost touch with the everyday material struggles in the homeland. The diaspora's devotion to the cause may make it more difficult for political actors back home to accept compromise solutions that may be condemned as appeasement or treason among the émigrés. In Armenia, for example, the first post-Soviet president Ter-Petrossian sought to base Armenia's foreign policy on state interests and make conciliatory gestures toward Turkey. The Armenian diaspora in the United States and France, however, regarded this as selling out their core issue of recognition of the Armenian genocide. Ter-Petrossian

[16] Gregory M. Maney, "Transnational Mobilization and Civil Rights in Northern Ireland," *Social Problems* 47:2 (2000), p. 153.

eventually fell to Robert Kocharian who followed the diasporas traditional anti-Turkish attitudes. Options categorized as unacceptable to key diaspora organizations had little chance for adoption.

It is not surprising that some diasporas have perceptions of the homeland that are frozen in time or distorted by nostalgia rather than recent experience. As the years pass, diaspora groups are likely to be increasingly distant from homeland events. Stories are told and retold, sometimes freezing images in the past and making it difficult to incorporate new information that may be from untrusted sources. As with refugees, some in conflict-generated diasporas' "self-identity is anchored more to who she or he was than what she or he has become."[17] One way to keep the past relevant is to keep alive the hope of returning, once conditions allow, even if this aspiration is remote.[18]

Understanding how conflict-generated diasporas often reinforce dynamics making conflicts more protracted is important for policy makers interested in promoting conflict resolution. Conflict-generated diasporas tend to have definite, categorical perceptions of homeland conflicts. If these perceptions can be reframed and made more complex and multifaceted through a process of dialogue, then the diaspora's role in the conflict may be changed. In addition, if a diaspora group shifts its support from the most militant leaders and organizations engaged in the homeland conflict towards a position that supports the leaders and movements seeking peace, then an important factor making conflicts more difficult to resolve can be reduced. Diasporas have the potential to be source of ideas and support for peace making as well as forces making conflicts more protracted.

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[17] E. Valentine Daniel and John Knudsen, *Mistrusting Refugees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 5.
[18] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1:1 (1991): 89-99.

The Ethiopian Diaspora: Diversity and Homeland Conflict

Conflict-generated diasporas therefore relate to homeland politics and conflicts in specific ways and are an additional, often complicating, set of actors to processes of change in the homeland. An analysis of the case of the Ethiopian diaspora in North America illustrates some of these points. This preliminary account suggests that the symbolic importance of territorial attachment can lead to categorical perspectives on a homeland conflict. This way of framing the debate in turn reinforces those disinclined to seek compromise and therefore makes constructive conflict resolution more difficult. In Ethiopia, some within the diaspora reinforced the decision of key parties to seek self-determination through armed struggle and boycotting of elections. After providing a background sketch of the Ethiopian diaspora, the paper will consider its role both in the democratic opening of May 2005 and the subsequent violent demonstrations, arrests, and polarized relationships.

The overall Ethiopian community in the United States is estimated to total anywhere from 250,000 to 500,000 with a large concentration in the Washington metropolitan area. In the 1960s and early 1970s the United States had a significant population of Ethiopian students. In later years migrants have come in waves in response to violence or political repression in the homeland.[19] The first wave of those associated

[19] See Donald N. Levine, "Reconfiguring the Ethiopian Nation in a Global Era," paper presented at the Fifteenth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Hamburg University, July 23, 2003. See also the nuanced treatment in Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). For a discussion on the general problem of "brain drain" and a specific consideration of Ethiopia see David H. Shinn, "Reversing the Brain Drain in Ethiopia," address before the Ethiopian North American Health Professionals Association Second Annual Conference, Alexandria, Virginia, November 23, 2002.

with Emperor Haile Sellasie's regime fled the Marxist military government known as the Derg in the early 1970s. These were followed by leftist opponents such as supporters of the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party (EPRP) who fled the period of "Red Terror" in the mid- to late-1970s.[20] The rule of the Derg saw protracted conflict against the Eritrean People's Liberation Front as well as a series of nationally based insurgencies, including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) that eventually created the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Party (EPRDF) and seized power from the Derg in 1991. Many in the diaspora opposed the Derg but also rejected the EPRDF's plans to rebuild Ethiopia on the basis of ethnically defined regions and parties. Others disparaged the EPRDF as unsophisticated and under-educated bush fighters from rural Tigray, upstarts who should step aside so that those Amharic-speaking urban professionals in the diaspora could govern. As a result, the new EPRDF government faced hostility from the diaspora from the beginning.

The Ethiopian diaspora community in North America has a wide range of organizations and newspapers, maintains dozens of websites, e-mail lists and influential blogs, broadcasts a number of weekly radio and cable television shows, and has a strong influence on the strategies and tactics of political actors back in Ethiopia. Many diaspora organizations and media focus on cultural, professional, and economic self-help initiatives. A number of Ethiopian Orthodox churches have been established across North America and publications like the "Ethiopian Yellow Pages" help Ethiopian owned

[20] See comments by Abiyi Ford in "Ethiopian Diaspora and the Visual Arts: A Discussion," in Elizabeth Harney, *Ethiopian Passages: Contemporary Art from the Diaspora* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers for the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2003), pp. 111-12. See also Jerry Markon, "Growth of Church Reflects Burgeoning Ethiopian Influence," *Washington Post,* June 19, 2003.

businesses and professionals to support one another.[21] The Ethiopian Sports Federation on North America has a soccer league with 25 teams and an annual tournament that draws tens of thousands and is an opportunity to renew old friendships, build solidarity, and listen to major diaspora musicians. Professional associations such as the Ethiopian North American Health Professional Association engage in distance education, specialized training for Ethiopian medical professionals, visiting surgical teams, collection of medical books and equipment, and financial support in response to the health care crisis in Ethiopia.[22] Many of the social and professional organizations contribute to the web of relationships and social capital that in turn are used by more political organizations to mobilize the community to support various movements engaged in political struggles in the homeland.

It is impossible to characterize the diverse population and wide range of identities within the Ethiopian diaspora fully or accurately. To help orient the analysis of politics in 2005, however, it is useful to offer a few, very broad and inevitably distorting descriptions. The diaspora is by no means unified. Some favor the incumbent EPRDF government, others a range of opposition movements, and still others are supportive of movements such as the Oromo Liberation Front that seeks self-determination for the Oromo people. Given the embassy's active engagement and profile, those who support the government have less need to organize in diaspora organizations, leaving these organizations more in the hands of opposition leaders. Organizations close to the government such as the Tigray Development Association do hold regular and quite

[21] See www.ethioyellowpages.com.
[22] See www.enahpa.org.

successful fundraising events in North America.[23]

Ethiopian political leaders, including those in the government as well as those in the opposition, regularly send delegations to brief their respective communities in North America and to solicit political and financial support. The Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a General Directorate in charge of Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs, includes a regular "Diaspora Forum" column in the ministry's monthly newsletter, and funds a radio station in Washington to channel its message to the diaspora.[24] Major opposition parties in Ethiopia such as the CUD and the OLF have organized branches in North America that mobilize supporters, raise money, publish newspapers and internet sites, and lobby on behalf of their organizations.

Many of the most politically active members of the diaspora and among those who engage in public discourse through publications and websites have their origins in the complex politics of the Ethiopian student movement of the early 1970s and the internecine bloodletting of the Red Terror of the late 1970s.[25] Others in the diaspora support the political positions of the All-Amhara People's Organization and its successor parties such as the All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP). Since early 2005, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (that includes the AEUP) received high levels of support. Still others are critical of the regime without a base in any of these currents of recent Ethiopian political history. The EPRDF and others often label the most vigorous opponents in the diaspora as "Amhara" but many within the diaspora prefer to think of

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[23] ENA, "TDA Organizes Fund-Raising Night in Seattle," *Ethiopian Herald,* August 22, 2006. Note that the state run media in Ethiopia cover fund-raising events in the North American diaspora, further suggesting the influential links between homeland and diaspora communities. The meeting reportedly raised over $50,000 for schools in Tigray.

[24] "Ethiopia: Finances a Radio Station in Washington," *Indian Ocean Newsletter* no. 1043 (24 May 2003).

[25] For an introduction see Tesfaye Demmellash, "On Marxism and Ethiopian Student Radicalism in North America," *Monthly Review* 35 (February 1984).

themselves as the inheritors of a legacy of "Ethiopian Unity."[26]

In sharp contrast to these leaders associated with Ethiopia Unity or the Amhara ethnic group, some Oromos in the diaspora reject this concept of an "Ethiopian homeland" and regard the Ethiopian state as an empire in which northern groups (Amharas and Tigreans, collectively referred to as "Abyssinians" by some Oromos) dominate the South. As a consequence they argue that the Oromo people have the right to self-determination and an independent "Oromia" state. The Oromo diaspora therefore defines itself through its rejection of the nation-state of Ethiopia and through its loyalty to and support for an independent Oromia. The Oromo diaspora has a clearly territorially defined sense of identity. Maps, nationalist colors, and images of the Oromo national symbol the *odaa* tree cover the walls of Oromo restaurants, are displayed on bumper stickers on Oromo-owned vehicles, and fill Oromo websites and publications.[27]

This sketch suggests that the conflicts in the homeland that drove many of the members of the diaspora abroad remain core focal points of their identities in their new host countries. A broad array of institutions and diaspora media maintain these identities and link the diaspora back to developments in the homeland. These conflict-generated Ethiopian diasporas are key players in homeland conflicts, in part because they provide key financial support but also because they frame the conflicts through their control over media outlets and other institutions where political strategies are debated and leaderships

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[26] Tegegne Teka, "Amhara Ethnicity in the Making," in M.A. Mohamed Salih and John Markakis, eds., *Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1998); Takkele Taddese, "Do the Amhara Exist as a Distinct Ethnic Group?" in Harold G. Marcus, ed., *Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, 1994, pp.168-186.

[27] Mekuria Bulcha, *The Making of the Oromo Diaspora: A Historical Sociology of Force Migration* (Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 2002); Greg Gow, *The Oromo in Exile: From the Horn of Africa to the Suburbs of Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 2002); Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

and strategies legitimized. Due to the nature of their attachment to the homeland, many frame the conflict in a categorical manner and are committed to the support of the most militant, uncompromising leaders back home. The Ethiopian diaspora therefore has the capacity to make conflict resolution more difficult and the conflict more protracted. These same links, however, may also serve to promote peacebuilding and democratization.

The Ethiopian Diaspora and the Political Opportunity and Crisis of 2005

Opposition political parties and leaders operating within Ethiopia have indispensable relationships with supporters and organized affiliates in the diaspora. In part due to the lack of political space within Ethiopia, opposition political organizations and strategies have been heavily shaped by the diaspora. The shift of tactics by key diaspora leaders from a position of demanding boycotts of elections in 1995 and 2000 to a position of deep engagement in the electoral process in 2005 was an indispensable precondition for key opposition parties within Ethiopia to compete. While the diaspora therefore contributed in a necessary way in the democratic opening leading up to the May 2005 poll, those abroad also played important roles in the post-election crisis.

Some within the ruling EPRDF claim that “extremists” within the diaspora used the elections as a cover to remove the ruling party through unconstitutional means and followed democratic procedures for tactical reasons. The regime charged that members of the diaspora with ties to the old order determined the strategies of opposition parties participating in the elections. As suggested by the debates both within Ethiopia and

abroad on the question of whether the opposition should participate or boycott the new parliament, different leaders within the diaspora had a range of opinions. These views were influential but did not determine the outcome of the debate.

The arrests of opposition politicians, the indictment of key diaspora leaders, and the effective criminalization of dissent in late 2005 led many in the opposition both within Ethiopia and in the diaspora to disengage from electoral politics. Many within the diaspora mobilized to apply pressure on the EPRDF by lobbying Western governments and international financial institutions to use their leverage to demand the release of the imprisoned opposition leaders. Still others have concluded that electoral fraud and post-election repression demonstrate that the EPRDF will only be removed by force and have shifted their support to groups engaged in armed struggle.

Events in 2005 most dramatically indicate these dynamics but a series of incidents since the 1991 suggest that these roles are not new and are characteristic of Ethiopian politics. When splits within the core EPRDF group known as the Tigray People's Liberation Front erupted in March 2001, both factions immediately sent high-level delegations to the United States to influence how the diaspora understood the intraparty conflict and to build support for their respective factions.[28] Leaders of the political opposition within Ethiopia regularly travel to North America and Europe to solicit support and receive advice. When the Southern Coalition entertained the idea of engaging with the EPRDF regime and competing in the 1995 elections, the diaspora was sharply critical and threatened to label Beyene Petros, the coalition's leader, as a traitor. Unable

[28] These meetings were often contentious and sometimes escalated to require police intervention. See "Ethiopia: Diaspora Unconvinced and Angry," *Indian Ocean Newsletter* no. 953 (9 June 2001).

to ignore this pressure, the Southern Coalition ultimately boycotted the elections.[29] Many of the most vigorous and dedicated supporters of Oromo self-determination and the OLF are in the diaspora. These supporters have insisted on uncompromising and unqualified demands – liberation of all Oromia by military means – and have supported OLF military leaders who pursue this agenda rather than other Oromo leaders such as those in the Oromo National Congress prepared to engage in political competition with the incumbent regime.[30]

The critical roles played by the Ethiopian diaspora were illustrated dramatically in the political events of 2005. Early in the year, two coalitions of opposition political parties receiving significant leadership and financial support from the diaspora decided to compete in the May 2005 national elections.[31] In 1995 and 2000 the major opposition parties boycotted elections. Key voices in the diaspora supported this disengagement from the political process, as illustrated by Beyene Petros' 1995 experience. The approval of leading diaspora organizations in 2005 and their assistance with finances and media access was critical to shift opposition parties from their earlier posture of boycotting elections.

The two main opposition coalitions that participated in the 2005 elections both had clear roots in the diasporas of North America and Europe. The United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) was created in 2003 at a convention held in the United States and included diaspora-based parties such as the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party as

[29] "Ethiopia: Negotiations in Washington," *Indian Ocean Newsletter* no. 658 (11 February 1995).
[30] Indications that the diaspora leadership was re-examining its assessment in the aftermath of the May 2005 elections opened up new opportunities for Oromo political movements to explore new alliances and strategies.
[31] Terrence Lyons, "Ethiopia in 2005: The Beginning of a Transition?" *CSIS Africa Notes* No. 25 (January 2006); J. Abbink, "Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and Its Aftermath," *African Affairs* 105:419 (2006): 173-199; Adbi Ismail Samatar, "The Ethiopian Election of 2005: A Bombshell and Turning Point?" *Review of African Political Economy* (2005).

well as parties based in the homeland such as the Oromo National Congress and the Southern Coalition. The Coalition for Unity and Democracy also had links to powerful diaspora fundraisers and media outlets and included several prominent returnees from abroad as candidate, notably Yacob Hailemariam (a former university professor from the United States).

The shift in strategy by key leaders in the diaspora to endorse and support participation in elections was critical to the commitment by opposition parties to compete. At the same time, the EPRDF allowed greater political space for the opposition to operate and campaign. Civil society organizations sponsored a series of televised debates on public policy issues, including such critical issues as land and foreign policy during which government officials engaged leading opposition figures in live, four-hour-long debates. Across the main regions, most Ethiopians saw more political debate and multiple candidates actively and peacefully soliciting support than ever before in their history.

Aspects of the political campaign included rhetoric and so-called "hate speech" that polarized Ethiopians. The EPRDF labeled the opposition as "genocidal" and akin to the Rwandan interhamwe during the campaign.[32] Campaign manager and Minister of Information Bereket Simon asserted that exile politicians with links to the Red Terror planned to use the electoral campaign as a pretext to launch violent rebellion.[33] Diaspora websites used very harsh rhetoric and images in criticizing the EPRDF and sometimes associated the government with the Tigray nationality group.

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[32] Deputy Prime Minister Addisu Legesse compared the opposition to the *interhamwe* in a televised debate on April 15 and the charge was reiterated by the EPRDF leadership throughout 2005.

[33] Bereket claimed that *Constitution, Elections, and Democracy in Ethiopia,* a book by former Meison leader Negede Gobeze who played a role in the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974, was a blueprint for using elections to organize mass demonstrations and unseat a constitutional government.

The outcome of the elections are controversial with the opposition claiming victory while the official National Election Board awarded the combined opposition 172 seats (31 percent) of the total, up dramatically from the 12 seats held prior to the elections. Despite this sea change in the composition of parliament, many in the opposition argued against taking up their seats and claimed that they had irrefutable evidence that it had defeated the incumbent regime and that massive fraud had taken place. International observers from the European Union and the Carter Center also noted problems with the count and with intimidation of the opposition, although they stopped short of accepting the opposition's claim that it had won the election.

Violence erupted following electoral protests in Addis Ababa in June 2006 and the summer and early fall 2006 saw a series of investigations of complaints, re-voting in some constitutencies, donor-sponsored talks between the government and opposition, and continued controversy. In this dangerous context that the two opposition coalitions engaged in a lengthy and sometimes public series of consultations to plan their next steps. Some favored a strategy of taking up their seats in parliament and in the Addis Ababa regional government and using these positions to build a stronger opposition in preparation for local elections in 2006 and the next round of national elections in 2010. Escalating violence, these leaders argued, would only play into the hands of the EPRDF, which had overwhelming military dominance.

Others, however, argued that accepting results that they and their supporters believed were fraudulent would make a mockery of democracy and that the opposition should stick to its principles and boycott the parliament. The EPRDF's unilateral decision to change the rules of parliament to make a 51 percent majority necessary to place an

item on the agenda (rather than the 20 signatures previously necessary) and new limits on the authority of the opposition-controlled Addis Ababa regional council reinforced the opposition's belief that the incumbent regime would never allow it to play a meaningful role. Some of the most vocal elements in the diaspora advocated this position and accused those willing to participate in the parliament of betraying the cause.

It is impossible to assess the relative strengths of these contrasting points of view regarding the best political strategy coming out of the election controversy. What is clear is that the decision to boycott was the outcome of an extended and relatively open period of debate within the opposition both within Ethiopia and in the diaspora. The diaspora had a significant voice in these often contentious discussions but were not the only perspective in the debate. Key opposition leaders traveled to Europe and North America at the same time public meetings were organized within core opposition constituencies such as Addis Ababa. In September 2005 some CUD leaders, such as Berhanu Nega and Lidetu Ayalew, were urging participation while others, notably Hailu Shewal, were announcing plans to boycott in front of diaspora audiences.[34] While the CUD's decision was made in Addis Ababa, important voices from the diaspora clearly had a role in shaping the outcome and tended to push for boycott rather than engagement.

Donors as well tried to influence this important decision and issued statements that urged all parties to take their seats.[35] Leading ambassadors organized a last minute set of meetings in early October between the opposition and the government in an

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[34] See the comments by Hailu Shawel at American Enterprise Institute, Washington DC, September 16, 2005 available at http://www.aei.org/events/filter.all,eventID.1204/transcript.asp. The Ethiopian Review, an opposition website, attacked Berhanu and asked why he "wants to work with the murderous regime of Meles Zenawi." Ethiopian Review, "Berhanu Nega is Going Against the People's Desire," September 21, 2005, found at http://ethiopianreview.homestead.com/001OpinionSep21_2005.html.

[35] "Ambassadors' Donor Group Statement," September 13, 2005, found at http://addisababa.usembassy.gov/adg091305.html.

unsuccessful effort to prevent a boycott. When parliament convened on October 11 most UEDF members took their seats, while all but a handful of the CUD boycotted. The EPRDF responded by escalating the conflict, lifting parliamentary immunity for those who boycotted and alleging that top opposition leaders were engaging in treason.

On November 2 and 3 violence exploded across Addis Ababa as confrontations between generally young demonstrators and the Ethiopian military resulted in some 42 deaths as well as the destruction of state-owned buses and private property. "This is not your run-of-the-mill demonstration. This is an Orange Revolution gone wrong," Meles said, referring to the successful 2004 people's power protests in Ukraine.[36] The government responded by arresting most of the leadership of the CUD along with private newspaper editors and leaders of several civil society organizations. The government rounded up thousands of mostly young people in sweeps through certain neighborhoods. On December 19, Ethiopian prosecutors formally charged some 131 opposition politicians, journalists, and civil society leaders with crimes ranging from genocide to treason. These charges reflect the bitter ethnic divisions generated during the campaign and the government's characterization of the opposition's campaign rhetoric as "hate speech." Among those opposition leaders facing charges are 10 elected members of parliament from the CUD, including Chairman Hailu Shewal, the opposition's choice for mayor of Addis Ababa Berhanu Nega, former Norfolk State University (Virginia) business law professor Yacob Hailemariam, and veteran human rights activist and Rainbow Ethiopia party organizer Mesfin Wolde Mariam. The court refused to grant bail. To demonstrate their contention that these trials were political, the CUD leaders refused to enter pleas or accept legal representation. By bringing these charges against its leading

[36] David Mageria, "Ethiopian Protestors Face Treason Charge," Reuters, November 10, 2005.

critics, the EPRDF effectively criminalized dissent and sent an unmistakable message that opposition will not be tolerated.

In another indication of the influence of the diaspora, seventeen of those indicted for treason and genocide were based abroad and included diaspora leaders in North America and Europe. Ethiopian businessmen, intellectuals, opposition party fund raisers, managers of critical websites, and several Voice of America Horn of Africa service reporters were indicted. Amnesty International suggests that "the charges are widely seen as a threat to silence other opposition supporters abroad."[37] The charges against the VOA reporters were dropped following pointed public criticism from Washington.

The breakdown in the political process in 2005 left the two main opposition coalitions shattered and new divisions both within Ethiopia, in the diaspora, and between Ethiopia and the diaspora.[38] The top CUD leadership is in prison and the question of securing their release has absorbed many in the opposition both in Ethiopia and the diaspora. Other elected opposition members of parliament (notably UEDP leader Lidetu who had been a major figure in the CUD) took up their seats but faced virulent criticism and physical threats from the diaspora and their own constituents in Ethiopia for breaking ranks with the imprisoned leaders. Despite several attempts and the support of donors in Addis Ababa, these opposition leaders outside of jail could not form an Addis Ababa city council. The CUD formed an international executive from among the diaspora in order to

[37] Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Prisoners of Conscience on Trial for Treason: Opposition Party Leaders, Human Rights Defenders, and Journalists," London, May 2006. Among those being tried in absentia are Elias Kifle, publisher of the US-based Ethiopian Review website; Abraha Belay, editor of the US-based Ethiomedia website; Professor Getachew Haile of St John's University, Minnesota, USA; Professor Mammo Muchie of Aalborg University, Denmark; Dr Negede Gobezie, past leader of Meison and current member of UEDF; Andargachew Tsege, former deputy Mayor of Addis Ababa and later CUD supporter; and Kefalegne Mammo, former president of the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association.
[38] "Confusion among the Opposition," *Indian Ocean Newsletter* no. 1164, January 14, 2006.

sustain the party and keep pressure on the regime.[39] The vagaries of exile politics, however, have generated controversy over leadership of the North American branch and questions about who really speaks for the CUD remain.

The main UEDF leaders in Ethiopia took up their seats but have faced similar blistering attacks from influential diaspora leaders and organizations. The largely diaspora-based Executive Committee of the UEDF stripped Beyene Petros and Merera Gudina, the Coalition's chairman and First Vice Chairman respectively, of their positions in response to their decision to take their seats in parliament.[40] The divisions within UEDF have left those seeking a role within political institutions and electoral processes within Ethiopia isolated and unable to effectively operate within Ethiopia. Without financial support from the diaspora, UEDF offices have closed.

It is notable that the 2005 campaign and the violence and arrests that followed focused primarily on the competition between the CUD, with its voting base in the Amhara and urban areas as well as strong support in the diaspora and the EPRDF. This conflict has had far less resonance among many Oromo, both within Ethiopia and in the diaspora. Few Oromo are within the top leadership of either the CUD or the EPRDF. The political views of Oromos, Southern peoples, and rural residents in general played at best secondary roles in the struggle between the CUD and the EPRDF.[41]

In this context of repression and limited political space within Ethiopia, leaders from the major opposition organizations formed the Alliance for Freedom and

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[39] "CUDP Leadership Abroad," *Indian Ocean Newsletter,* no. 1187, January 7, 2006.
[40] United Ethiopian Democratic Forces Press Release, October 24, 2005; "UEDF Goes Underground," *Indian Ocean Newsletter* no. 1165, January 21, 2006.
[41] This point is made by Siegfried Pausewang's comments distributed by e-mail December 21, 2005. Meles Zenawi made public gestures toward the OLF as the crisis with the CUD escalated in 2005, offering to engage in talks without precondition. Nothing came of this initiative, however. See Martin Plaut, "Ethiopia PM Reaches Out to Oromo," BBC, September 13, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/africa/4240644.stm.

Democracy (AFD) in June 2006. This alliance brought together the broadest range of political opposition groups, including many that viewed each other with suspicion in the past. The AFD, however, seems to be driven by an overwhelming desire to remove the incumbent regime and frustration with electoral politics rather than by a shared commitment to pluralism and peaceful political competition. Due to conditions in Ethiopia, the AFD is dominated by exile politicians and therefore emphasizes the leadership and ideas of the diaspora rather than grassroots leaders in Ethiopia. Parties such as the CUD that participated in electoral competition in 2005 are now linked to organizations such as the OLF, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and the Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front (EPPF) that have been supported by Eritrea and have waged armed struggle against the EPRDF.

Key elements within the diaspora therefore have aligned themselves with the imprisoned CUD leaders and behind a strategy of disengagement from the political process. Some articulate a hard-line stance that equates compromise with the EPRDF as betrayal and thereby reduces the room for opposition leaders in Ethiopia to maneuver or to engage in political opposition within parliament. Many within the diaspora focused their attention on government policies in Washington and London for supporting Meles Zenawi and the EPRDF and therefore mobilized to shape international opinion and policy.

The Ethiopian diaspora has become active in Ethiopian politics in new ways as a result of both the enthusiasm of the May 2005 election and the disillusionment and frustration of the aftermath. The diaspora has been very effective in raising money and using the internet to mobilize an effective advocacy network that has organized

demonstrations and lobbied members of the U.S. Congress, State Department, and World Bank. Organizations such as the Ethiopian Americans Council maintained pressure for passage of the Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy, and Human Rights Act of 2006.[42] Diaspora leaders testified before congress, circulated petitions in support of the legislation, and encouraged Ethiopian-American to write to their members of Congress. Similar activities took place in Europe, with a particular focus on the European Union. The internet helped link disparate activities and protests around the world into a global campaign.[43]

As frustration within the diaspora mounted following the arrests of the opposition leadership and the lack of success in pressing for their release, vocal members began to abandon electoral strategies and endorse armed struggle as the only way to remove the incumbent regime. The Alliance for Freedom and Democracy represented such a move. The Ethiopian Review, an influential opposition website, published articles in support of the Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front that was fighting the EPRDF from its bases in Eritrea and pledging to assist "in any way it can to help its fighters achieve their goal of liberating our country."[44]

The EPRDF regime vigorously criticizes the diaspora's response to the post-election crisis and labels its opponents as "extremists." The June 2005 "Diaspora Forum" column in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs characterized those in the diaspora campaigning to discredit the elections as "remnants of the Dergue" and "former Red

[42] http://www.eacouncil.org/
[43] The Ethiopian Democratic Action League website (www.tegbar.org), for example, lists and has links to reports and pictures to rallies in Sydney, Canberra, Calgary, Geneva, Boston, Sacramento, Atlanta, Toronto, Las Vegas, Detroit, Frankfurt, Edmonton, Tampa, Paris, Nashville, Bern, London, Melbourne, Chicago, Leuven (Belgium), Dallas, Munich, Columbus, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Brussels, Washington, and Addis Ababa.
[44] "Patriotic Front Makes its Presence Felt in the Washington DC Metro Area," *Ethiopian Review,* September 4, 2006, found at http://ethiopianreview.homestead.com/00009042006News_EPPF.html.

Terror perpetrators" who are "fanning violence through demonstrations from Atlanta to Amsterdam from Canada to Brussels."[45] Consistent with a line of argumentation relating to "hate speech" that appeared toward the end of the campaign, the EPRDF leadership attempted to associate the opposition leadership participating in the electoral process in Ethiopia with elements within the diaspora associated with the abuses of Mengistu Haile Mariam's regime. Later in 2006, the government reportedly blocked access to opposition websites and political blogs[46] and opposition website published a document that reportedly outlined a plan to control the diaspora through Ethiopian embassies.[47]

Officials in Washington have met and consulted with leaders of the diaspora community and recognize that a mobilized constituency with Congressional support will always be an important factor in policy formulation. Some, however, have been more critical of the diaspora's role. In August 2005, Ambassador Aurelia E. Brazeal, the then US ambassador to Ethiopia, criticized what she called "internet politics" for contributing to the crisis. "In the Ethiopian context, Internet politics is when a loud and vitriolic minority of voices, many of whom have not been in this country for years or even decades and have far less at stake than Ethiopians at home, urge those actually living here to act on the basis of old-think ethnic identifications or frozen and aged images of how Ethiopia used to be."[48]

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[45] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Diaspora Forum: Election and the Diaspora," June 2005, found at www.mfa.gov.et/Press_Section/Newsletters6/DiasporaForum.htm.

[46] Among the websites blocked, according to Reporters without Borders (www.rsf.org), were cyberethiopia.com, ethiopianreview.com, tensae.net, quatero.net, ethioforum.org, ethiopianpolitics.blogspot.com, enset.blogspot.com, ethiopundit.blogspot.com, seminawork.blogspot.com, and weichegud.blogspot.com.

[47] The Amharic document is available at http://www.ethiomedia.com/carepress/document.pdf. I have no information on the authenticity of this document but the fears and reactions it generated reflect deep patterns in diaspora political thinking.

[48] Farewell Speech by Ambassador Aurelia E. Brazeal delivered to the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce, August 23, 2005, available at http://addisababa.usembassy.gov/amb_speech082305.html.

The Ethiopian diaspora therefore played a number of critical roles in the dramatic political events in 2005 and the continuing crisis in 2006. The diaspora's ability to frame political debates and act as gatekeeper for opposition strategies made diaspora support for engagement in electoral competition essential for the May 2005 elections. Both major opposition coalitions had links to the diaspora and relied upon supporters abroad for funds, publicity, and advice. Following the controversies and violence over the summer 2005, the diaspora contributed to but did not determine the decision by the CUD party to boycott the parliament. The EPRDF identified diaspora "extremists" as responsible for much of the political crisis and indicted leading members of the diaspora and blocked access within Ethiopia to opposition blogs based abroad. The impressive May 2005 elections and the discouraging post-election violence, criminalization of dissent, and shift from electoral politics to armed struggle all suggest that the diaspora is an important but not determinative actor in Ethiopian politics.

Diasporas and Peacebuilding: Engagement and Transformation

Understanding how conflict-generated diasporas reinforce dynamics that often make conflicts more protracted is important for policy makers interested in peacebuilding. How can external parties work to reduce the roles diasporas play in making conflicts less inclined to settlement? As argued above, conflict-generated diasporas tend to have categorical perceptions of homeland conflicts. If these perceptions can be reframed and made more complex through a process of dialogue or some other process, then the diaspora's role in the conflict may be revised. If, as a result, a diaspora

group shifts its support from the most militant leaders and organizations engaged in the homeland conflict towards a position that supports the leaders and movements seeking peace, then an important factor that makes conflicts more difficult to resolve can be reduced.

Diasporas therefore have the potential to be source of ideas and support for peace making as well as forces making conflicts more protracted. As noted above, the Ethiopian diaspora played important if controversial roles in both the democratic opening of early 2005 and the subsequent crisis and closure. The sketch below of an initiative to engage the Ethiopian diaspora in an extended dialogue to challenge some of the categorical assumptions that contribute to protracted conflict illustrates just one potential mechanism for the diaspora to engage in peacemaking.

From 1999 through 2003 a group of graduate students and faculty at George Mason University's Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) conducted an "Extended Dialogue" with members of the Ethiopian diaspora.[49] A group of community leaders from the various segments of the Ethiopian community in the Washington metro area to met on a more or less monthly basis for a total of 20 meetings with the ICAR team serving as facilitators. This Ethiopian Extended Dialogue (EED) suggests that engaging a conflict-generated diaspora in a process of conflict resolution has the potential to alter the diaspora's perceptions of the homeland conflict. New, more complex perceptions may reduce the degree to which the diaspora reinforces the tendency for conflicts to become protracted and increases the potential of the diaspora to become a

[49] Terrence Lyons, Christopher Mitchell, Tamra Pearson d'Estrée, and Lulsegged Abebe, *The Ethiopian Extended Dialogue: An Analytical Report, 2000-2003* (Fairfax, Va.: Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution Report no. 4, 2004). Other diaspora dialogues have been led by the Conflict Management Group in Cambridge, Massachusetts (see the American Diaspora Alliance for Israeli Palestinian Peace website at www.adaipp.org) and the Institute for Multitrack Diplomacy in Virginia.

source that supports peacemaking.

ICAR's Ethiopian Extended Dialogue built on the work done by Harold Saunders, who developed a type of intervention he called a "Sustained Dialogue" and used it to encourage discussions between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War and among parties to the internal conflict in Tajikistan.[50] The goal of a sustained dialogue is to address protracted social conflict, rebuild relationships, and to "change conflictual relationships over time."[51] Sustained dialogues are unofficial by design with an open-ended agenda subject to the desires and interests of the participants, not forums for formal negotiations among official parties to sign a peace agreement. ICAR's major role as facilitators was to provide participant's space and facilities where they could express their views and perceptions about the conflict in Ethiopia without fear and intimidation.

Much of the dialogue revolved around how members of the diaspora understood issues of identity, both in terms of their personal identities as members of a community divided by violence and in terms of how identity drives many of the conflicts back in the homeland. To speak in very broad terms, the discussions tended to be three sided. On the one hand, one group of participants emphasized the overarching unity of Ethiopians and emphasized interdependence among the Ethiopian people. To them Ethiopia represented a glorious historical and territorial entity. To some this conception of Ethiopia included the entire territory of the currently recognized state as well as the neighboring state of Eritrea. Another group suggested that the starting point for understanding Ethiopia was to recognize the structural, colonial system of domination and oppression and emphasized

[50] Harold H. Saunders, *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts* (St. Martin's, 1999).
[51] Saunders, *A Public Peace Process*, p. 43.

that certain groups, most notably the Oromo, had been incorporated into the Ethiopian "empire" state without their consent. The territorial space occupied by "Ethiopia" in this point of view included "Oromia," the territory occupied by the Oromo people who awaited their legitimate self-determination. To them Ethiopia merely represented a geographic concept rather than a source of positive identity based on voluntary association – Oromia was their homeland. A third group also emphasized the use of force and domination in southern Ethiopia but worried that potential Oromo domination might replicate the historic northern domination of smaller, vulnerable identity groups. This third group shared the territorial definition of the homeland of the first but also the perception of historical oppression expressed by the second. These different perspectives on the conflict therefore had territorial dimensions in that each point of view had a different conception of what the space labeled as "Ethiopia" should be. Competing visions of homeland that overlap and occupy the same finite territorial space make the Ethiopian conflict particularly difficult for members of the diaspora to discuss together and hence inhibit conflict resolution processes.

Over the course of some twenty meetings with a core group, sufficient trust developed so that the quality of discussions changed. In the early meetings many participants made statements of principle and expressed their positions with regard to the injustices that they perceived caused the conflicts in Ethiopia. Over time, however, the discussions became more complicated and nuanced as participants increasingly recognized how other groups also had legitimate grievances, how principles sometimes were in tension, and how as common members of a diaspora all had interests in promoting a just and sustainable peace in the homeland. These more complex perceptions

opened up new possibilities for recognizing new options with regard to conflicts in the homeland.

The different assumptions about the core issues generated different implications for proposed solutions. Some of those who saw structural relationships of domination argued that the only solution was to transform the structure of the imperial state through self-determination and separation of the subjugated peoples. Many of those who regarded the history of domination as an elite led process of authoritarianism and military rule suggested that the solution was to build a stronger democracy within Ethiopia. Some participants tended to emphasize democratization rather than self-determination as the solution. Under conditions of broad and voluntary participation, they argued, there would be no need for groups to seek separation.

The organizers of the EED did not expect that these discussions by themselves would mark a major shift in the conflict behaviors of the parties engaged in conflict back in the homeland. All small group processes such as dialogues or problem solving workshops face the challenges of how to translate the new perceptions and attitudes from the small group to the larger community. In addition, questions always remain with regard to whether social psychological processes such as dialogues and workshops can alter the structures that generate conflicts. What the ICAR facilitation team sought to explore was whether engagement by a third party in a conflict resolution process with the diaspora could promote new perceptions and new attitudes among the diaspora. These new attitudes, it was hoped, would complicate the diaspora group's view of the conflict back home and lead to a greater willingness to accept compromise or conflict resolution initiatives by leaders back home.

The Ethiopian Extended Dialogue is not the only effort to engage the diaspora in thinking about the community's potential roles in supporting peacemaking in the homeland. A group calling itself Ethiopian Voice of Reason (EVOR) organized forums and issued statements in 2005 and 2006 calling for dialogue and reconciliation to resolve the political crisis. While aspiring to serve as a vehicle for discussions within the diaspora, EVOR was explicitly critical of the political opposition for having "failed" the Ethiopian people.[52] Ethiopian students at Harvard Law School sponsored a symposium on "Ethiopia: Prospects for Democracy" that brought together U.S. scholars with Ethiopian politicians from all sides of the electoral crisis.[53] The symposium was webcast and included many of papers on its website. The Ethiopian American Constituency Foundation has organized workshops and conferences on democracy as well. The Ethiopian Institute for Non-violence Education and Peace Studies (EINEPS) established by Elias Wondimu, an Ethiopian publisher based in Los Angeles, seeks to "build a culture of nonviolence and peace through education, research, advocacy, and institutional transformation."[54] EINEPS supports the Awassa Peace Center in Southern Ethiopia, an institution that aims to engage in akido, training in non-violence and peace, as well as provide a place for local dialogues. The Ad-Hoc Peace Committee included leaders in Ethiopia as well as in the United States and engaged in conflict resolution in the 1990s.

There are nongovernmental and civic groups within Ethiopia working to promote peacebuilding but this sector is underdeveloped even relative to Kenya or Uganda. Religious leaders and organizations have engaged in conflict issues both at local levels

[52] See for example EVOR statement "In Search of the 'Perfect' Democracy and the 'Perfect' Constitution for Ethiopia" and its statements critical of the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy.
[53] The Ethiopian ambassador was invited but did not attend. See www.ethiopiasymposiumharvard.com/
[54] www.eineps.org.

and between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In June 2006, the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church who was recently elected head of the WCC called upon "the people of faith in Ethiopia and Eritrea to work with the political leaders to accelerate the coming of lasting peace."[55] Ethiopian and Eritrean journalists have met in Germany and young leaders have engaged in discussions in Nairobi. The Ethiopian Peace and Development Committee has organized workshops and trainings in Addis Ababa and the Inter-Africa Group which is based in Addis Ababa has played important roles in promoting dialogue. These organizations are led by actors within the region and diaspora leaders have not played major roles.

This by no means inclusive or even representative list of activities in the diaspora and within Ethiopia relating to the promotion of democracy and peace is designed simply to indicate the wide range of organizations looking to play constructive roles. The potential for the diaspora to transform its roles in polarizing conflict, expand its potential roles in peacemaking, and to build links with those organizations working for constructive conflict resolution are significant and largely untapped.

Conclusion

Diaspora groups with their origins in conflict often cultivate a specific type of linkage where homeland territory takes on a high symbolic value and becomes a focal point for mobilization. As a result, diasporas often support militants engaged in homeland conflicts and tend to frame conflicts uncompromising and categorical ways that influence the political strategies of the parties back home. Parties directly engaged in the

[55] "Church Leader Seeks Ethiopia, Eritrea Peace," Reuters, June 30, 2006.

homeland's conflict depend on diaspora supporters for resources and access to international media, international organizations, and powerful host governments, thereby giving diaspora groups' influential roles in the adoption of strategies relating to conflict. The particular importance of symbolic territory and a conception of homeland to diaspora identities and their consequent framing of homeland conflict in categorical, uncompromising terms often prolong conflict. In some cases, as illustrated by the Irish-American case, diaspora groups can cultivate the capacity to promote peace rather than sustaining division.

The case of the Ethiopian diaspora in the United States reflects both the diversity of the community and the critical roles played by those who are most actively engaged in the political struggles in the homeland. Ethiopian politicians perceive the diaspora as a key source of resources, ideas, and leadership. Both the government and the opposition seek to build support within the diaspora and regularly send delegations to brief communities abroad and to use internet and other forms of media to promote their positions. The democratic opening and subsequent crisis in 2005 demonstrated the diasporas potential. The shift of tactics by key diaspora leaders from advocating electoral boycotts to supporting opposition participation was a necessary condition for the competitive elections of May 2005. Without the support of the diaspora key opposition leaders and parties within Ethiopia would not have participated. Following the contentious process of vote counting, allegations of fraud, violent demonstrations, and mass arrests of major opposition politicians and indictments of important diaspora leaders, the diaspora moved away from support for electoral politics and toward lobbying for international financial pressures or even strategies of armed struggle.

The Ethiopian case therefore suggests the diverse roles played by a broad range of different constituencies in the diaspora. One dynamic that tends to contribute to protracted conflict is the unqualified and categorical perceptions of homeland conflict held by many in the diaspora. ICAR's dialogue project suggests that programs to foster discussions within the diaspora can promote more constructive attitudes toward homeland conflict. To date, however, diaspora involvement by the Ethiopian diaspora in peacemaking has been episodic and not well institutionalized. The potential of conflict-generated diasporas such as the Ethiopian community to polarize as well as to bring together key actors in the conflicts in the homeland is great and deserving greater attention and analysis.

The Role of the Eritrean Diaspora in Peacebuilding and Development: *Challenges and Opportunities*

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I. Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the funding support and general vision of UPEACE in Toronto. This project has provided the Eritrean community in Canada with its first participatory action research experience in exploring peacebuilding. Furthermore, this project has been crucial in revitalizing a collective and safe space to discuss issues of peacebuilding and community development in the Eritrean Diaspora. We would like to acknowledge the dedicated support of our youth peers in the newly-formed Eritrean Youth Coalition (EYC) as they have made meaningful the concept of "participatory research". The following individuals: Arsema Berhane, Fnan Desta, Abreheit Gebretsadik, Dahab Hagos, Mereb Hagos, Sara Said, Sammy Sebhatu, Eden Seraka, Aman Sium, Yafet Tewelde, Shewhat Zeru have been instrumental in brainstorming the research questions for the survey, gathering primary data via key informant interviews in the community, clearly identifying potential challenges and obstacles in the research and offering solutions, and, most importantly, reflecting deeply on and sharing with us their own experiences as Diaspora Eritreans in Canada. We would like to acknowledge and thank the Eritrean community for its readiness, interest and commitment to participate in this project.

II. Acronyms

CIDA **Canadian International Development Agency**

EYC **Eritrean Youth Coalition**

ECCC **Eritrean Canadian Community Centre**

EYAC **Eritrean Youth Association of Canada**

ECAO **Eritrean Canadian Association of Ontario**

SPN **Selam Peacebuilding Network**

UPEACE **University for Peace**

III. Executive Summary

As part of the University for Peace Diaspora – Peacebuilding and Development program, the Selam Peacebuilding Network conducted a project from July 2006 to September 2006 with the following objectives:

1. Analysing the roles played and strategies used by the Eritrean Diaspora community to strengthen peacebuilding and promote development in Eritrea.
2. Mapping the ways in which different Diaspora actors may contribute positively to sustainable peacebuilding and development in Eritrea and identify factors that may foster or hinder these roles.
3. Explore the conditions under which peacebuilding or development initiatives within the Eritrean Diaspora community in Canada might benefit peacebuilding or development in Eritrea.
4. Identify opportunities to expand or enhance the effectiveness of the Eritrean Diaspora contributions to peace and development including through improved policy frameworks and targeted education, training or other capacity building programs.

The project targeted the Eritrean Diaspora in Canada, mainly in the Toronto and surrounding areas – Hamilton and Ottawa. Through a participatory action research approach, various sources of data were collected through focus groups, one-one key informant semi-structured interviews, an online survey and personal reflections. A review of relevant literature was also conducted.

A team of 5 project researchers supported by about 10 youth peers undertook the research. A gender analysis lens, through the Vulnerabilities and Capacities Framework was used to analyze the data along with the Role and Accountability Analysis framework. A Community Peacebuilding Framework was utilized to identify key areas of Diaspora capacity that require introduction and enhancement.

This is the first community-based peacebuilding research project in the Eritrean Diaspora. The findings are thus significant in starting to understanding the complex issues related to the role of the Eritrean Diaspora in peacebuilding and development. The findings identify opportunities for possible action to enhance the role of the Eritrean Diaspora.

The Eritrean-Canadian Diaspora is a transnational community of communities, with those who mostly settled in Canada in the 1970s to early 1980s. The life of the community is intricately connected to the history of the independence struggle that saw the birth of a new nation in 1991. After 25 years of settlement history in Canada, the Eritrean Diaspora community is undergoing a generational change, where the children of immigrants are slowly shaping the present and future of the community itself. Like many other communities, the community continues to experience issues and challenges typical to immigrant and newcomer communities.

This research project reveals the following:

1. **Community Cohesion** is low in real and perceived terms. In real terms, there are no available structures or capacity-enhancing networks for the cohesion to take place. In terms of the community perception of cohesion: lack of trust, lack of meaningful dialogue and communication, lack of ability or desire to seek help from the community and lack of leadership all contribute to this situation.

2. **Perception of Peace in the context of the Eritrean Diaspora**
   The perception of peace is varied among respondents in all data sets: Key Informant Interviews, Online Surveys, Focus Groups and Personal Reflections. For some the perception of peace meant "internal peace", a precursor to community peacebuilding, and for others it was inversely related to the socio-economic context that required them to emigrate. The personal reflections revealed nine interesting conceptions of peace and peacebuilding.

3. **Roles/Responsibility in Peace building and Community Development**
   Over 85% of online survey respondents noted a role for individuals in peacebuilding. However, the other 3 qualitative data sets revealed structural factors, such as globalization, the overall fragmented situation of the community and life-circumstances as a hindrance to real participation.

4. **Barriers to fulfilling the role**
   Conflict and Conflict Resolution practices were identified as the number one barrier to fulfilling the role of peacebuilding and capacity development. The sources of conflict identified by respondents were:
   - Gender-based
   - Religion-based
   - Class-based
   - Region(province)-based
   - Age-based
   - Politics-based

   The lack of conflict-resolution mechanisms was implied by the way online survey respondents explained how the community deals with conflict:

   - Conflict is avoided (49%)
   - Conflict is resolved (9%)
   - Conflict becomes more intensified (35%)
   - More than 60% of online respondents believe that the Diaspora does not know how to resolve conflicts.

5. **Strategy to overcome barriers**
   There are many strategies to overcome barriers. These can operate at the individual, group/network and community levels. They include leadership training, workshops to address the generational gap, conflict resolution and peace education, project planning and implementation, and, most importantly, creating a safe space for responsible and open dialogue.

6. **Opportunities for Action in the Short-term**

Opportunities for action in the short-term include securing funding through grants, community supporters and government agencies in order to make peace and capacity-building a more sustainable goal.

IV. Background and Introduction

1. General Framework for UPEACE Initiatives

This research entitled '*Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of the Eritrean Diaspora',* was initiated through funding by the University for Peace (UPEACE) in Toronto, Canada. In July 2005, UPEACE started the preparatory work to launch an International Centre of UPEACE in Canada that would provide "…a focus for education, training and dialogue on critical issues related to the building of peace and the prevention of violence and conflict."[1] One of the four official missions of UPEACE in Canada is to strengthen education for peace globally by "developing and delivering high quality programmes of education and training on strategic themes related to building peace, lessening violence and managing conflict."[2] Working under the strategic thematic programme, *Diaspora and Peacebuilding,* this research study is a particular manifestation of the UPEACE agenda to strengthen capacity for peacebuilding in the Diaspora. This study in the Eritrean Diaspora community in Canada represents one of five community pilot projects. The other communities involved are Ethiopian-Canadian, Afghan-Canadian, Colombian-Canadian and Jamaican-Canadian.

2. Contextualization of the Eritrean Diaspora in Canada

Eritrea is one of the youngest nations in the world today, having gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1991 following a 30-year struggle. With an estimated population of 4.4 million[3] (UNFPA 2005), Eritrea is situated in the Horn of Africa, bordered in the north by Sudan, Ethiopia on the south, and Djibouti on the southeast. The geo-political role that Eritrea has played in its post-independence years, mainly due to its large share of the Red Sea coastline and two important ports – *Massawa* and *Assab*, cannot go unnoticed.

Our literature review revealed new and interesting information about the Eritrean Diaspora in Canada and elsewhere. Many similarities exist between Eritreans in Canada and Europe in their trends of unification and forces of divergence. What has come out as important in the literature is the need to contextualize the history of the Eritrean-Canadian Diaspora in order to understand its inherent burdens as a minority group in Canada as well as its connection to Eritrea. Studies on trends in international migration and transnationalism have proved helpful.

The term Diaspora is derived from the Greek *diaspeirein,* meaning "dispersal or scattering of seeds". However, the terms Diaspora and Diaspora communities are increasingly being used as a metaphoric definition for expatriates, expellees, refugees, alien residents, immigrants, displaced communities and ethnic minorities. The term Diaspora has also been used to describe the experience of movement / displacement and to analyze the social, cultural and political formations that result from this movement / displacement.

The Eritrean Diaspora is a transnational community that started to immigrate to Canada in the late 1970s to early 1980s.[4] Most left Eritrea to a temporary country of residence before coming to Canada due to the thirty-year Struggle for Independence (1961-1991). Eritreans understand all too clearly the feelings of confusion, frustration and incapacity that stem from the trauma of war, displacement and (re)integration. Displacement of populations from Eritrea was massive. Close to one million Eritreans were displaced from their territory

[1] See UPEACE Online for more information: http://www.toronto.upeace.org/content.cfm?id=5
[2] See: www.toronto.upeace.org.
[3] See: http://www.unfpa.org/profile/eritrea.cfm
[4] (Citizenship and Immigration Canada report)

during the thirty-year struggle. As Kibreab (1996) has noted, the majority of them became refugees in neighbouring Sudan, from where many have not returned (Kibreab 1996; Bascom 1998).[5]

One study (Al-Ali et al, 2001) that compares the transnationalism of Eritreans in UK and Germany to that of Bosnians in the UK and Netherlands has been particularly useful. It stressed the importance of historical context, and the interconnection of social, political and institutional factors in producing "highly uneven patterns of transnational activities both within and between these two groups."[6]

Al-Ali et al (2001) note that transnational activities can be classified in a variety of ways:

> They may include activities that are **political** (for example, lobbying), **economic** (for example, remittances and investment), **social** (such as, promotion of the human and other rights of the transnational group within different societies) and **cultural** (for example, articles in newspapers). They may take place at the **individual** level (through family networks), or through **institutional** channels (such as, through community or international organizations). Taking the case of refugee or exile groups, while directly transnational activities might be focused on the home country, indirectly transnational activities might also include the application of pressure on the host government or international organizations for change in the home country, or indeed the promotion of the rights of the exile community itself. (Al-Ali et al, 2001: 4 – emphasis added)

One of the difficulties of documenting the experiences of the Eritrean Diaspora is that there are no accurate data on the size of the Eritrean populations in host countries in North America and Europe. As Al-Ali et al (2001) recognize, this is principally due to the fact that they were registered upon arrival as 'Ethiopians' rather than 'Eritreans'. (Al-Ali et al, 2001: 6) One important indicator for obtaining these numbers is the voting figures for the *1993 Referendum for Independence*. As Al-Ali et al (2001) document:

> …according to these data, a total of 84,370 votes were cast by Eritreans outside Eritrea (Referendum Commission of Eritrea 1993). They indicate that the most significant host countries for Eritrean refugees outside Africa are Saudi Arabia (37,785), the USA and Canada (14,941) and Germany (6,994). However, these data certainly underestimate the true size of the Eritrean Diaspora, largely because they record only those Eritreans eligible to vote – that is over eighteen years of age (Styan 1996). (Al-Ali et al, 2001: 6)

The Eritrean Diaspora is actively involved in the social, political and economic situation in Eritrea. As Tekie Beyene, Governor of the Bank of Eritrea described the contributions from the Diaspora - it is "beyond anybody's imagination" (Voice of America, June 24, 1998).[7] During 1991-1997 when Eritrea made considerable economic and social progress after Independence[8], the Diaspora community in Canada was relatively unified. There were many plans for progress and capacity building in the Diaspora. However, the outbreak of the border war in Eritrea from 1998-2001 aroused old resentments and frustrations. The community continues to unite in relation to coping with death, critical illness and unexpected social issues by raising money to help one anther. It is in this highly dynamic broader context that this project on *"The Role of the Eritrean Diaspora in Peacebuilding and Development – Challenges and Opportunities"* was undertaken.

[5] Gaim, K.1996 'Left in limbo: prospects for repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan and responses of the international donor community', in Tim Allen (ed.), *In Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight and Homecoming in Northeast Africa*, London: James Currey, pp. 53–65 **and** Bascom, J. 1998 *Losing Place: Refugee Populations and Rural Transformations in East Africa*, Oxford: Berghahn Books

[6] Nadje and Black Al-ali, Richard and Koser, Khalid, "The Limits to 'Transnationalism': Bosnian and Eritrean Refugees in Europe as Emerging Transnational Communities", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 24. No. 4 (2001).

[7] Bernal, Victoria. "Eritrea Goes Global: Reflections on Nationalism in a Transnational Era", *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 19, no. 1 (Feb., 2004)

[8] Eritrea experienced a decline in real GDP growth from an impressive 8% (1993-1997) to 3.9 percent in 1998, 0.8 percent in 1999, and a negative growth of 8.2 percent in 2000. (UNDAF, Eritrea, 2002).

3. "Peacebuilding" and "Development" in the Eritrean-Canadian Diaspora Community

Eritrea came into being as a political entity when Italy carved out a colonial territory along the western shores of the Red Sea. As Trevaskis (1960:10–11) puts it, "Italy created Eritrea by an act of surgery: by severing its different peoples from those with whom their past had been linked and by grafting the amputated remnants to each other under the title of Eritrean."[9]

Eritreans have many differences: regional, ethnic, linguistic, religious, political, etc. These differences operate in various ways and make real peacebuilding, such as fostering meaningful dialogue and supporting networks for social change, difficult in practical terms. However, these differences didn't prevent the Eritrean people from working together to achieve independence.

Conflict resolution is usually where peacebuilding starts. In 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then United Nations Secretary-General, announced his Agenda for Peace (Boutros-Ghali, 1992) and defined "peacebuilding" as,

"…action to identify and support indigenous structures which will help to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict, although today it is increasingly also seen as a preventive measure." (Boutros- Ghali, 1992)[10]

Since this definition was introduced, many interpretations have arisen. However, central to "peacebuilding" is its cautious and pragmatic approach to "peace" itself. "Peacebuilding" highlights the difficult reality that the end of conflict does not automatically lead to peaceful, stable social or economic development.

Like many important concepts, "peacebuilding" and "development" have been defined in the international and community development literature in various ways. Indeed, peacebuilding *implies* the development of social, economic, political, environmental networks. We have had to not only identify the regional scope and limits of peacebuilding and development in this research[11] but also conceptualize their relationship to each other. In this research we have assumed that peacebuilding is *sine qua non* to the process of Eritrean community development in the Diaspora. We have been constantly reminded that peacebuilding is a cautious task, requiring sensitivity to the various levels of difference and conflict existing in the Eritrean Diaspora community, differences and conflicts that are increased or resolved in the process of community development.

4. Comparative strengths and advantages

One of the strengths of this research has been the interest and curiosity it generated, resulting in the revival of substantive issue-based participation in the Eritrean communities involved. As noted previously, the Eritrean Diaspora community is an active group of individuals, families, associations and networks aiming with best intentions to help Eritrea develop itself. A more particular advantage is the social access we had to already formed groups in Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa, and through the internet, to other cities in Canada. The fact that we had various sources of information: *online surveys*, *key informant interviews, focus group*

[9] Ibid., p. 5
[10] Agenda for Peace (Boutros-Ghali, 1992)
Global Policy Forum: http://www.globalpolicy.org/reform/initiatives/ghali/1992/0617peace.htm
[11] For example, peacebuilding in Canada is not the same as peacebuilding in Eritrea, how we can successfully merge the two is a question that came up repeatedly in interviews, focus groups and discussions among researchers. The fact that peacebuilding is necessarily a local project represents one of the limits of it since much of the conflicts are carried through ideological, political and personal ties to Eritrea.

discussions, literature review and personal reflections, helped in triangulating the data and drawing thematic conclusions.

V. Research Design

1. Ethical Considerations

A non-partisan and apolitical approach was applied to the research process in order to collect as many different views as possible. We assured participants that every effort would be made to include all Eritrean groups regardless of age, sex, religion, language, level of education, profession, place of birth and political affiliations or regional ties in Canada or abroad. The participants were well-informed about the objectives of the research and the full background of the researchers involved**.** The role and activities of UPEACE and the link to this research project were also explained to all groups of participants.

Participants were informed that responses would be kept confidential and would not be shared with other parties within the community or parties who are not involved with the research project in any way. The option to remain anonymous was offered to participants, and the wish of those who chose to do so was respected. For the sake of accountability and transparency, key findings of the research were also shared with community members at a publicly-advertised community validation session prior to the presentation to UPEACE Expert Forum. Highlights of the findings would also be made available electronically to interested participants and the community outside Toronto.

2. Data Collection and Approach

In light of the participatory nature of the research, a variety of approaches were deemed appropriate for the primary data collection process. These consisted of *key informant semi-structured interviews*, *focus group discussions, online surveys, literature review and the submission of ten personal reflections on peace and peacebuilding.* Each methodology is briefly described below:

- The **Key Informant Interviews** contained thematic questions which were designed to gain a deeper insight into the community members' individual perceptions on peace, capacity building and development. The interviews were conducted by ten youth peers owning diverse skills, experience and viewpoints. Each youth was assigned to target specific segments of the Diaspora community. All informal interviews were recorded and documented. Interviews took place at locations chosen by interviewees. Total number of key informant interviews was 52.

- **Focus group discussions** were also held in order to capture each community segment's opinions on the research topic, especially within the context of a group setting sharing similar characteristics. Such sessions included discussions with youth peers, women groups, church groups and Ethiopian-born and/or raised Eritreans. There were eight focus group discussions in total. They consisted of youth (ages 16-34); working mothers and professionals (35-55+), women born/raised in Ethiopia (25-44); and men (35-55+).

- **The Online Survey** was administered in order to gather more information on themes that kept on resurfacing during key informant interviews. The total number of completed online surveys was 57.

- **Personal Reflections** on peace and peacebuilding attempted to gauge the opinions of the research team and youth peers on capacity building as it relates to peace and community development. The total number of reflection papers was 10.

3. Research Questions

The research questions were developed through a participatory process with the peer youth group. Sixteen critical questions were finally agreed upon and were used for the online survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The participatory and engaging process took time before the questions were finalized. Please see **Appendix 1 and 2** for sample questions.

4. Literature Review

The research explored a variety of documents, articles, books and government statistics relating to Diaspora communities and their roles vis-à-vis peacebuilding and community development. Given that most studies focus on one or two cross-cutting themes, it was challenging to find one major inter-disciplinary study addressing the three main issues explored in this research. This could be attributed to the fact that little research has been done on the Eritrean Diaspora in Canada or elsewhere. Furthermore, the fact that peacebuilding in a Diaspora community was a novel idea lent the research a certain degree of difficulty, calling for a more hands-on and creative approach.

Among the few studies reviewed, key concepts related to "*transnationalism*"[12] helped shed some light on the extremely complex reality faced by Diaspora communities. The Eritrean Diaspora exemplifies clearly the notion of being caught between its nationalistic ties to the homeland and its basic survival struggle to fit into the economic, social, and political agenda of its host nation, or its new home. Transnationalism in the Eritrean Diaspora is thus fluid, changing constantly and dictated by circumstances "back home" in Eritrea, individual needs, level of education, social ties and time.

Other definitions highlight that peacebuilding is an arduous journey as it has to simultaneously address "both immediate and longer term objectives...Peacebuilding is a two-fold process requiring both the deconstruction of the structures of violence and the construction of the structures of peace."[13] It should be noted, however, that in light of the Eritrean diaspora setting, there are no structures of violence *per se*. Instead, these would be equated to the lack of structures and proper, community-regulated networks that would support and enable a safe forum for dialogue and exchange of ideas and opinions.

[12] Nadje and Black Al-ali, Richard and Koser, Khalid, "The Limits to 'Transnationalism': Bosnian and Eritrean Refugees in Europe as Emerging Transnational Communities", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 24. No. 4 (2001).
[13] Kenneth Bush. A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCIA) of Development Projects in Conflict Zones. Working Paper. (1998)

5. Research Limitations

a) Area of Study and Terminology

- **Diaspora** - is a broad and fluid concept. In the context of the project and the international experiences of various Eritrean communities, the need for specificity in order to make reasonable claims and come to acceptable conclusions is obvious. For example, Eritreans who have been in Canada for a generation versus those who have come in the 3-5 years, after the Border War (1998-2001) necessarily have different perspectives, capacities, interests and readiness to engage in community-based peacebuilding and development.

- A working definition of Diaspora understood by many in the community is essential.

- **Peacebuilding –** this is also a broad and generic word understood differently by various people. How many of the Diaspora Eritreans understand peacebuilding as opposed to peacekeeping, peace enforcement and peacemaking? How can we be talking about these terms in Tigrigna, Tigre, Arabic, Saho, and other Eritrean languages?

- The research team was often confronted with the challenge of alleviating misunderstandings arising from translation or language barriers. For instance, some participants expressed consistently that *"everybody wants peace anyway"*, as opposed to critically exploring what peacebuilding meant and what role they could play in establishing an environment conducive for its existence. Our suggestions to them were necessarily cautious in order not to skew the findings with our own beliefs.

- Eritreans in the Diaspora have small communities of their own, defined by religion (church & mosque community), politics (the "opposition", the pro-government, the "disconnected", etc.), the integrated "Canadian" community (mainly youth), the social groups, etc. The Eritrean community is a community of communities. Given the limited project time, this project may have not reached all segments of the communities.

- The online survey sampled the "computer-literate" only.

b) Research Methodology and Approach

- Our sample size may not be adequate enough to be representative as this was a pilot-project. Thus the value of the project is qualitative rather than quantitative.

- Some of the challenges of the research reflect the everyday realities of Eritreans living in the Diaspora. The availability of participants for interviews was limited due to time constraints related to work and family commitments. Political divisions and lack of cohesiveness in the Eritrean Diaspora community is always a challenge for researchers. There is a general lack of trust of the research goals and the researchers due to the limited opportunity for honest dialogue across different sectors of the community. Our collective (and oftentimes unspoken) understanding of these issues made it easier for us to strategize on how to get the most valuable feedback from available sources.

- The questionnaires may have included few leading questions that may have introduced some bias into the study.

- After the data collection process, we realized the following :

  i) **Re: Question #1 (under "Community Involvement")** - The question regarding community involvement was unclear as we did not define community; therefore, people replied with different ideas in mind and making comparison among responses quite difficult. However, it did allow us to see the different ways people perceive "community" and what "community involvement" meant to them.

  ii) **Re: Question #4 (Demographic)**- The section for demographic information left out the option for participants to note "Divorced". We only had "Married" or "Single" as an option. The breakdown of marriages due to stress of life in the Diaspora as well as changing values of partners is an important point of intersection between peacebuilding in the family context and peacebuilding in the community.

  iii) **Re: Question #5 (Demographic)-** Our question about the number of children in the family was unclear. We did not specify whether the respondent should state how many children they had or how many were in their family. This created confusion for younger respondents particularly since they provided us with the number of siblings they had. The lack of clarity here was problematic because we were unable to discriminate between the numbers of single women with children from the youth who reported the number of siblings they had.

c) The Researchers

Researcher bias is reduced by the systematic selection of research team members and youth peers that span the various demographic, geographic, socio-economic, political and ideological spectra within the communities.

d) Project Timelines and Budget

The limited project timeline and budget had impact on project scope, sample size, secondary research and coverage of the various segments of the community.

VI. Key Findings and Analysis

1. Thematic Qualitative Analysis: *Key Informant Interviews*

As noted in the Data Collection and Approach section above, Key Informant Interviews was one of the four ways we collected data. We conducted 52 interviews with the help of youth peers. We organized the data by Age (16-34, 35-54 and 55+), Sex, Marital Status and Place of Birth. This helped us to notice the trends in responses according to place of birth and time of emigration to Canada. The following table shows the basic demographics of the key informant interviews:

	Age Group 16 – 34			Age Group 35 – 54			Age Group 55+		
	Single	Married	Birthplace	Single	Married	Birthplace	Single	Married	Birthplace
Female	24	-	87% outside Eritrea	1	8	All in Eritrea	-	1	Eritrea
Male	9	1	90% outside Eritrea	2	2	All in Eritrea	-	4	All in Eritrea

Table 1

The questions asked in the survey were organized around three themes: *Community*, *Peace and Peacebuilding* and *Conflict and Conflict Resolution*. Similarly, we analysed the data along these thematic lines. We went through each survey to document the most repeated and different responses for each question that was easily reduced into "Yes" or "No" categories. If we could not reduce them to "Yes" or "No", we had two simple categories that were logical to the question. This process was useful because we saw the trends in responses for participants in the same age groups. It provided us with a qualitative lens with which to view the more standard online survey responses (in #2). The following is the result of our thematic qualitative data analysis under the headings, *Community*, *Peace and Peacebuilding* and *Conflict and Conflict Resolution*.

THEMATIC QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS:

COMMUNITY

Q #1: Involvement/connection?

Yes – through church,

- raising money to help women back home
- taking kids to soccer
- stay connected through events, family, org. work
- weddings and parties
- homework club
- empowering
- mediation
- socializing

No – am a business man, don't care about feeling connected
- am a youth and don't speak the language
- disconnected, biased, uninterested in real change
- lack of clarity about how to best be involved
- lack of knowledge of the issues
- lack of information on what is going on in the community

Q #3: Risk and benefits?

Risk – time & energy consuming
- political mislabelling
- single mother who works cannot participate
- bad communication makes it hard to tell people your mistakes
- some communities are mutually exclusive, so by belonging to one you exclude yourself from another
- *"the community uses you and throws you away"*
- judgement
- community is not welcoming of change, *very conservative*
- *"If my work was appreciated and not just expected, I may help more."*

Benefits – connected to roots & culture
- creation of solidarity
- organize to help people back home
- help our kids to have one united community
- self-satisfaction
- contribute to the making of a strong community
- don't feel lonely, sense of belonging
- gaining knowledge

Q #4: Cohesiveness/Unity?

No – politically, religiously, regionally
- lack of understanding and dialogue, misunderstanding or various groups their goals and objectives
- no good communication
- lack of trust
- very divided! – due to politics
- up to the youth to do better
- educational differences divide "scholarly condescension toward those of lesser education" (and less trust of scholars)
- cronyism
- lack of accountability & responsibility
- too much pointing fingers and blame shifting
- we have *"no say no vote"* in community affairs

Yes –religious community having same goal, in major events, celebration
- those who said "united" didn't give much e.g. or reasons why!

#5: Effectiveness?

Yes - helping those in need -instilling national pride -supporting Eritrea during the war -organizing events -only for funerals and weddings - the Nurses Association trying to improve the situation for nurses in Eritrea - Sports Association/Tigrinya school - Tutorial
No – can not be effective when divided – From youth- they focus too much on issues in Eritrea rather than in diaspora – We need guidance from skilled people to set up our own community – we need to develop a community in Canada before helping Eritrea – *"only effective when the world is against Eritreans but this is not enough, we need to be effective and work together when the threat is less immanent…"*

Q #5: What can be learned from other communities?

-Bring expert and competent leaders giving back to community – financially -accessing resource, funds -"…we should learn from Somali they help with references for jobs and offer volunteer services; help housewives and women deal with stress by fundraising and organizing activities." -*"…we are way behind…we should learn Chinese, Greek, even Ethiopian community…"* -*"There is something out there to be learned from others"*

Q #7: Diaspora connection to homeland – is political activity connected to politics in Eritrea?

Active – in supporting financially, concern for well being of situation in Eritrea, emotionally
Not active- can not influence much, corruption and division here is not directly connected
Not anymore: -used to be active

PEACE & PEACEBUILDING

Q #8: Experience of peace?

Yes – 1991-1997 -after freedom there was peace but not now here in Canada...we struggle
No- we never had peace from colonization

Q #9: Describe Peace and peace building?

Peace -lack of war, living in harmony tolerance, peace of mind
- economy determines peace
- peace is freedom
- wisdom
- "proper"/equitable allocation of resources
- loving environment
- peacebuilding is when we trust our leaders
- *"establishment of structures and institutions promoting security and liberty"*
- *a process of conflict mediation and restitution and any other corrective efforts*

PB- political maturity
- tolerance
- unifying people, having one goal
- doesn't come as a gift, needs sacrifice
- *"ability to live together without losing one's rights, respect and dignity"*

Q#10 and Q#11: Approach/barrier to peacebuilding and sustainability?

Approach-Understanding of problem at hand
-Learning to listen and agree to disagree on views and political stand
-Respect others ideas and opinions how ever different (open-mindedness)
-diplomacy and professionalism
-leadership with "proper conduct" and that lead by good example
-need to be devoted to the cause of peacebuilding
-creation of a safe space
- realising that everyone is important
- involving the youth
- seminar/discussion group
- building on a good foundation with rules and regulations that everyone has to follow
- to separate politics from community issues
- voluntarism *and appreciating volunteers*
- hire people for jobs in the community
- enhance youth leadership

Barrier – Misunderstanding
-lack of communication and dialogue
-passing judgment, lack of diplomacy
-*negative thought "in the community right now, they always try to figure out who is behind an idea and what their political involvement and this type of attitude creates a bad atmosphere for those who want to work"*
-beliefs
-lack of freedom of speech
-"*politics is like a virus with no cure"*
-educational levels
-belittling people's genuine concerns
-gossip

Sustainability
– involving intellectual leaders
-Educating the young and pass the torch of leadership, bring new and fresh idea
-patience and willing to wait
-unity, cooperation
-funds and external support via partnership

CONFLICT & CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Q #12: Seek help from community?

No – don't trust
-not for financial help
-not for health
-fear of stigma
-privacy not quarantined: "gossip is a disease"

Yes – for events and celebration
-spiritual guidance
-our people are helpful people
-during tragic situations we are helpful
-for social problems only and will approach people *"with caution"*

Q#13: Is there conflict in community?

Yes- politics, individuals

- many don't know function of a community
- class-based
- religious & politics
- regionalism
- ignorance
- there are divisions in divisions – between same religions and same political affiliations
- perceived "greediness" and "embezzlement"
- patriarchal arrogance
- some forcing ideas on the community
- *"gang mentality"* or clique-based
- we don't deal with conflict face to face: *"we just talk shit about someone when they're not there, and smile in their face when they are"*
- misleading others and sabotaging their work instead of learning from them

No –

- We live to help each other

Q#14: How do we deal with conflict?

Positively- **-**traditional means on some issues such as intervention when there are domestic issues -what is in the family stays in the family
Negatively - denial - indifference - avoidance/escapism - resignation - gossip - don't "walk the talk" - "separate into two communities; people will build another community"

Q#15: Conflict as extension or reflection of back home politics?

Yes- various interest of reflection or extension of what happen back home - because we are essential to bringing change - the extent to which we are connected is on an emotional level
No -

2. Role & Accountability Analysis: *Online Survey, Focus Groups, Personal Reflections*

Given the different ways the data was collected, we had quite a lot of raw data with different analytical indicators to choose from. We felt that the thematic approach of the **Role & Accountability Analysis (RAA)** framework would be useful to incorporate the findings from the *online surveys, focus groups* and *personal reflections* and lend itself well to the goal of this project in identifying roles for capacity building. In the RAA framework, there were four indicators focusing on ***a)*** *Perceptions of peace in the context of the Eritrean Diaspora* ***b)*** *Roles and responsibilities in Peacebuilding and Community Development* ***c)*** *Challenges faced by Community Segment* and finally, ***d)*** *Strategies for Peacebuilding and Community Development*. In this section we describe each of these indicators and incorporate the responses from the three sets of data. The RAA tables have been designed according to the focus group responses alone. Please see *Appendices #3, #4, #5, and #6* for the detailed results of the RAA.

a) Perception of Peace in the context of the Eritrean Diaspora

Participants understood "peace" in a highly varied and personal way. For some, it alluded to an evasive *peace of mind* - a phenomenon that takes place within *oneself* first and foremost. For many others, it was clearly linked to their experiences of war, fleeing their homeland, and finding security in Canada or another host country. As such, their reality dictated that peace be understood with a point of reference to the socio-political situation of their home country. The remarkable result was that for most, peaceful times had explicit associations in their minds to Eritrea's milestones, such as the Independence in 1991 and the post-independence years until 1998.

The personal reflections (see *Appendices #7, #8 and #9* for three examples) were an excellent way to promote dialogue about peace and peacebuilding in the Eritrean community. There were ten reflections in total. Each researcher completed a personal reflection about their own thoughts and experiences of peace, conflict and peacebuilding. The remaining five were submitted by youth peers.

The personal reflections of the researchers as well as the youth peers on major thematic questions were collected as a way of cross-checking to minimize bias as well as to demystify the personal connections the

research team had to the project. The reflections were honest and quite moving. They spoke to the collective desire Eritreans have to realize peace in their lifetime, as well as to the collective skepticism that this will happen.

Peacebuilding in the Eritrean community was recognized as a pressing issue by all the researchers and one that needs immediate intervention. As pointed out by one researcher, the lack of peacebuilding initiatives impacts the new generation - *"My biggest fear of more than 10 years ago is slowly being realized in my lifetime: that the lack of peace and harmony of the adults and parents is passing to their growing children."*

It was also understood that peacebuilding is a task that does not show its results overnight. As one respondent reflects, *"…development can only bear fruit when the small successes of peacebuilding are preserved and celebrated…peacebuilding and development do not have expiry dates but are rather ever evolving and continuous processes that demand our concerted and proactive efforts."*

The following are some important ideas brought to the fore in the personal reflections of 5 researchers and 5 youth peers:

- **Peace is collaboration.** Sharing of resources, skills transference, helping the needy, social activities such as sports, interfaith and interdenominational dialogue.
- **Peace is a state of mind.** In a world full of chaos we can still find some peace within and to me that is the best kind of peace there is.
- **Peace is allowing democracy and various freedoms to exist.** Peace is allowing people to become a part of a community without the constant threat of being ostracized or excluded due to their differing beliefs.
- **Peace is when you and your family are safe**. It is not sitting at home wondering if war is going to break out any minute; if you are wondering or praying for the safety of your son and brother in a war zone. Peace is an environment where one can live without fear because of impending wars or persecution due to one's political or religious convictions.
- **Peace is more than the absence of war.** It would also mean that communities do not feel threatened by external or internal forces and are able to pursue their economic and political activities without fear.
- **Peace is free involvement.** It is the capacity to help people without being asked to be loyal to this or that political group. It is substantial involvement with fellow Eritreans without being labeled with this or that regional group.
- **Peace is co-existence**. Peoples of differing cultures co-existing in a cohesive community.
- **Peace is compromise and patience**. It is the ability to co-habit with people of differing opinions without relying on violence or coercion to make your point clear.
- **Peace is active**. It means thinking peace, believing in it, acting on it and promoting it among individuals, groups and locally and internationally. Peace is the state of mind where one can focus one's energy on constructive activities and thoughts.

b) Roles and Responsibility in Peacebuilding and Community Development

A fairly large number of the respondents acknowledged that they each have a role to play within the context of peacebuilding and community development. More than 89% of online respondents believe that the Diaspora can play a role in promoting peace among Eritreans in the Diaspora and in Eritrea. However a few participants, including 10% of online respondents, seemed resigned and frustrated by the entire process of community building, opting instead to shift blame on other active community members. (See **Figure 1** below)

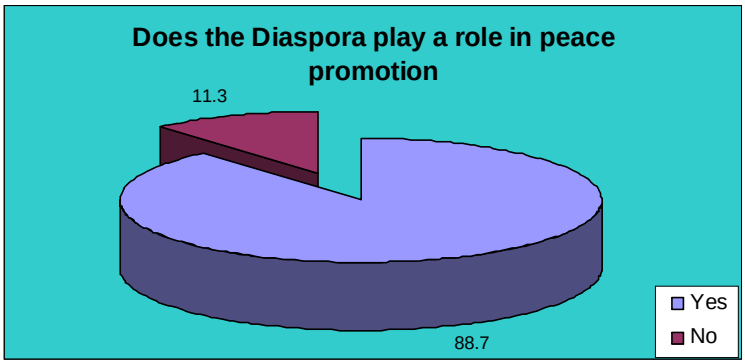

Figure 1

Participants' responses on their roles and responsibilities primarily focused on community development, as opposed to peacebuilding, probably owing to lack of understanding of the terminology and what it entails. The concept of peace, despite being perceived and understood differently, is a notion that the majority in the Eritrean Diaspora connect with readily.

As researchers, we appreciate and recognize the enormity of peacebuilding processes in general and in the Eritrean Diaspora community in particular. Some people reflected on the readiness (or lack thereof) of the community to have honest and responsible dialogue; others acknowledged the deep psychological divide and recommended a time to heal by finding peace for themselves from within: *"based on my own experiences; that peace comes from within the self as much as it is affected by external factors, that the balance between maintaining peace and development work is very fine"*

Others focused on the inevitable effects of globalization on the community and recommended that Eritrean diversity be used as a tool to understand the ever-evolving outside world: *"As the world increasingly becomes smaller, our own identities are linked with "other" identities. As Eritreans, the fusions of many cultures, languages and religions put us in a good place to understand the merging of identities that rapid political, economic and cultural globalization cause us to contend with in the world."*

c) Challenges to Contributing to Diaspora Peacebuilding and Community Development

One of the major challenges to contributing to Diaspora Peacebuilding and Community Development is the perception that many respondents have about **Conflict** and **Conflict Resolution** in the Eritrean Diaspora.

The following are some **types of conflicts** identified by online respondents, (See **Figure 2** below):

- Gender-based
- Religion-based
- Class-based
- Region(province)-based
- Age-based
- Politics-based

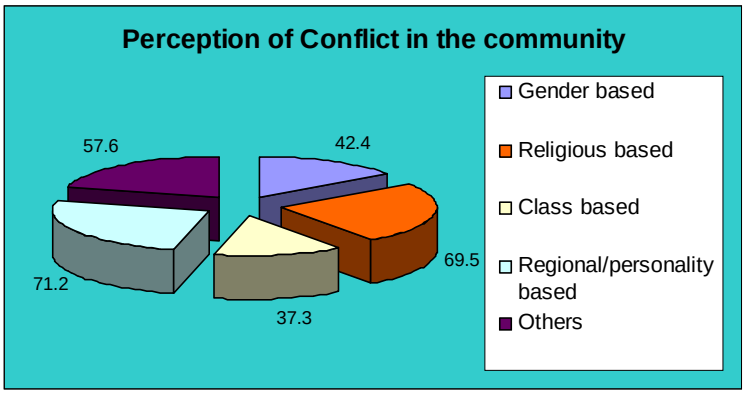

Figure 2

In **dealing with conflict**, online respondents identified the following approaches common to the diaspora (See **Figure 3** below):

:

- Conflict is avoided (49%)
- Conflict is resolved (9%)
- Conflict becomes more intensified (35%)
- More than 60% of online respondents believe that the Diaspora does not know how to resolve conflicts.

Figure 3

The following comments indicate some of the perceptions about conflict in the Diaspora:

- *We hide it and hope that eventually it will go away without anyone finding out*
- *We ostracize*
- *don't talk about it unless in hushed tones*
- *we are stuck in the past*
- *we depend on higher authorities to solve our problems while they are the major cause of the problem*
- *we become defensive and aggressive*
- *pretend it does not exist*
- *we attack people, their families, their roots*
- *the majority will simply drive the minority out*

- *we tend to put blames and responsibility on others or we are indifferent!*
- *personal conflict between individuals tend to cascade down from father to son, to close friend and the community at large*
- *when will Eritreans recognize that it's okay to disagree?*

Compared to other communities, conflict in the Eritrean Diaspora community is perceived as
- Less than (14%)
- The same or similar (46%)
- More (39%)

The major findings in this critical section dealing with *Challenges to Contributing to Peacebuilding* from the three data sets include:

i) **The lack of cohesiveness in the Eritrean Diaspora community;**
ii) **The widening gap between generations, and**
iii) **The lack of community leadership**

i) Lack of cohesiveness

For the majority of respondents, the Eritrean Diaspora is a fragmented society based on socio-political, economic, religious, regional, linguistic lines. This idea was strongly expressed by all the different groups, regardless of their age or gender. More than 84% of online respondents identified their community as non-cohesive and ineffective.

Many have noted that the division in the Diaspora community had escalated further after the 1998 border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Despite the division in the community, there was also recognition that some common vision still ties the community together, but that this was very loose and highly informal. This can be explained by the fact that Eritrean Diaspora continue to relate personally to their homeland and maintain a unique ethno-national or ethno-cultural consciousness. For example, many respondents said that the fact that Eritreans collectively believe and commit to the maintenance, preservation and/or restoration of their homelands brings them together. There was also a consensus among respondents that at times of crisis or happy occasions like weddings; everybody lends a helping hand without prejudice. The lack of formal structures to support and unite the community in meeting their needs was however identified as one of the main barriers to community advancement.

When asked what the major divisive factor in the community is, most respondents stressed the lack of meaningful dialogue and communication among the different political and religious groups.

The lack of trust in the operational capacity of the community was also voiced by most respondents as the main reason for not using the services of their community. For example when respondents were asked if they are comfortable to approach the community for help, most answered with a resounding NO! In fact, one woman specifically warned her interviewer that trust is such a problem for her that she does not even trust herself. Even though this may seem absurd, it illuminates the urgency and extent of the problem.

About 95% of online respondents don't see their community as the source for help in resolving their social and personal conflicts. This lack of trust is more pronounced in women than men – 100% of online women respondents have no trust in their community.

Most of the respondents and the researchers felt that lack of cohesiveness in the Diaspora community today is/was the extension of events that was unfolding in Eritrea:

"As *Eritreans we have been wounded and scared mentally from years of conflicts from within and outside forces. That experience has left us with a deep psychological division which prevents us from embracing our diversity in creed, political ideology, and religious beliefs and so on. We are continuously engaging in*

measuring our "Eritreaness" based on sets of standards, assumptions and expectation. Who is there to justify these standards and expectations?"

In the words of some respondents, the lack of cohesiveness is attributable to:

- *Pride, Politics, and Personal conflicts. Our members drag personal issues into the community building exercise. This is reflected negatively in the form of poor professionalism and long drawn personal grudges.*
- *A long history of independence war that created many political groups that don't want to let go of the past.*
- *Lack of knowledge and skills to work together, build assets together, compromise and grow together.*
- *The recent war with Ethiopia has opened the ugly sides of our community in a more vivid way: regionalism, religion, politics, etc.*
- *Immature politics, lack of critical thinking, exaggerated sense of nationalism that contributes to inability to work and participate with others.*

Everyone appreciates that the challenges to peacebuilding can be relative and vary greatly from person to person. As much as *diversity in views and beliefs* is the current stumbling block the community is facing (preventing an open dialogue), people are cautious about the misuse of diversity:

> ***"****We understand diversity very clearly as Eritreans. We have felt the wrath of its ugliness when it is manipulated politically and, conversely, we understand the power of diversity when directed toward a common end or goal."*

ii) Generational and Educational Gaps

In the context of the Eritrean Diaspora, generational divergence takes several forms; between parents and children/youth, between early "settlers" and those who have recently migrated, and between those born here and those born in Eritrea/Ethiopia. Educational differences within the Diaspora are usually between the groups of those educated and those not education as well as between those educated "back home" and those educated in the West. Most often, socio-economic factors are key to an individual's level of education. The impact of these disparities plays havoc on community building, as expressed by most respondents - particularly the youth and professional groups. Most expressed resignation and frustration, and summed this feeling aptly by stating that "*parents can't really be our guides because they feel we know the Canadian system better, and we cannot go to them to ask for help related to school or social issues …"*[14]

On the other hand, parents' main concern was to "*rescue the next generation*" based on the premise that there is a lack of leadership and organized initiatives for them. Most parents found themselves at odds in terms of the examples they should set for their children, as this was linked to their priority of either assimilating in their adopted country or constantly staying engaged in issues affecting Eritrea. Assimilating implies understanding and learning the "Canadian" systems in order to improve their economic and social status to ensure a more promising future for their children. On the other hand, staying engaged in issues affecting Eritrea implies that parents are more involved in fulfilling their commitments to their family and the rebuilding of Eritrea through remittances and other contributions. In the short term, this may have serious implications on the quality of their children's lives, and in the long term, the extent of their own economic and social involvement in Canada.

Many of the youth felt disconnected and felt that the role of their parents as community leaders to bridge the gap in bringing them to the larger community has been weak. They also felt that political views, regionalism and religious division are the segregating factors.

[14] Youth Focus Group Discussion, September 24, 2006.

Parents, on the other hand, feel that they have not been supported by the community leaders and blame the more educated members of the community for abandoning the leadership position. However, the majority of respondents recognize that there is a need for creating a space for dialogue.

iii) Lack of leadership

Respondents clearly stated that the lack of guidance, leadership and understanding of Canadian social values as well as the gap between the "two worlds" is one of the main challenges for the Eritrean community. Young people expressed that they constantly search for mentors and role models in the Diaspora community, especially when considering educational and career options, but often come up short.

d) Strategies for Peacebuilding and Community Development

- **Education** is one of the key factors that have impact on the role of the Diaspora in peacebuilding and development and is critical for creating a context for working together. As some respondents put it, there appears to be a need for re-educating both young and older segments of the community on how to best serve the common interests of the Diaspora.

As some respondents put it,

> *"Ignorance works best in isolation. Getting people of different backgrounds/views together in a safe place where they can have dialogue and emphasize what is common rather than focusing on differences".*
>
> *"We have a rich history and culture, and yet, some of us are also integrated into mainstream western societies. So, we have to find a middle ground, somewhere where the older generation and the youth can find a comfortable zone. We might also have to look at other models of conflict resolution and critically assess whether those would work for our community."*

- **Responsible Dialogue** was recommended:

  "*I say it is about time we learn the art of* ***agreeing to disagree*** *in ideology and belief because not only is it healthy but also an essential precursor for peacebuilding*."

- **Focus on children and the youth**

Respondents felt that they needed to take action to be part of the community by participating more actively. Some of the women expressed their desire to bring the children together to play and learn.

The youth suggested creating a network to start a more organized mentoring program for the younger generation to get direction on to how to go to university and colleges.

- **Empower women**

Although women are active participants in community activities in the Diaspora, it appears that for most, the roles they take on do not enhance their strategic interests and needs. Often, they are relegated to performing productive (cooking), reproductive (caring of children) and collective roles (help out at weddings, funerals, etc.). Women need to feel safe and confident enough to take part in community leadership positions and decision-making processes. This unfortunately is not entirely up to them, as they would need

tremendous support, training, and guidance from youth groups, networks of professional women, and men leaders and advocates.

- **Encourage parents to learn about Canadian values and systems**

Some youth expressed that their parents did not fully understand Canadian values and systems and left it to them to figure out the "system". This placed tremendous responsibility on the youth, who felt that they not only had to master the system in Canada, but they also had to do so within the confines of Eritrean norms and expectations. As a result, they felt conflicted, frustrated and overwhelmed, particularly in relation to community involvement. They believed, however, that if parents increased their knowledge of Canadian values, they might be able to understand the different pressures that girls and boys experience outside the home.

VII. Gender Analysis

a) Justification and Background – Gender Issues in Eritrea and in the Diaspora

Peacebuilding and community development initiatives cannot be explored without taking gender issues into account. It is commonly assumed that appropriate gender and cultural considerations have been made at all phases or that interventions are gender-neutral. The impact of such oversight often excludes women out of the peace and development discourse, often ignoring or only partially meeting their needs. Women and men have different access and control over resources, power and decision-making, dictated by gender role divisions and other external factors (age, religion, class, ethnicity, etc.). As a result, they each play different but complementary roles in peacebuilding and development, and as a result are affected differently by each process. As such, any initiative that addresses peacebuilding and community development calls for an inclusive and consultative approach.

This research has attempted to apply a fairly gender-integrated approach in terms of methodology and gender makeup of the research team, youth peers, and respondents. Consequently, a gender analysis was deemed necessary to supplement the overall findings of the study and gain insight into how gender issues play out in the Eritrean diasporic community.

CIDA's Gender Equality Policy defines gender and gender roles as:

> "…the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men. [It]... includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). These roles and expectations are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures."[15]

The above definition highlights that gender is not a fixed and unchangeable biological category, but a constantly evolving phenomenon; molded by external factors. Gender roles in a Diaspora setting mimic the requirements and demands of the adopted culture. To illustrate this, an Eritrean man living in Canada could find himself performing household chores that he would not have fathomed doing back home, eg. cooking, doing his own laundry, baby-sitting, etc… Similarly, an Eritrean woman may now be able to actively participate in the decision-making process of her household, exercising some form of control over her life and her children's lives. What she was unable to do back in Eritrea, such as contributing as an equal partner, becomes feasible and even essential to her survival and that of her family in her adopted country.

[15] CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality, 1998.

The Eritrean Diaspora, like many others in Canada, is defined and shaped by the cultural identity it brought over from Eritrea. Despite the constant pressures of assimilating into the Canadian society, the Eritrean Diaspora community strives to also preserve its conservative heritage. One such tradition that is still fairly intact in the community is its patriarchal structure, which determines the division of roles and responsibilities between women, men, girls, and boys. One young man in the youth focus group discussion pointed out that even though men take the performative mediator's role among conflicting groups, women are the ones who most often do the grassroots legwork. In sum, women play a significant role in the process of peacebuilding in that they establish vital links and relationships with people[16]. Unfortunately, women's impact and influence on peacebuilding and development processes usually go unacknowledged.

While the division of labour and roles are well defined within the Eritrean patriarchal society, the diaspora community finds itself constrained by the demands of maintaining the "old ways" and the pressures of living in a new environment embracing almost gender-blind values. As indicated above, women and men in the diaspora setting often find that some of their gender roles have shifted and even over-lapped. Nonetheless, it is still not uncommon to note that women are expected to assume productive, reproductive, and community roles, in addition to maintaining employment outside the home. This is a clear example of a culture struggling to conserve its long standing patriarchal ideals that place a higher value on a woman's reproductive role despite the challenges imposed by her new surroundings. In pre-independent Eritrea, a woman's "*role was perceived by society as being wholly tied to her 'natural activities': the production and rearing of children.*"[17] Although this perception still prevails today, despite new legal frameworks to protect women and improve their status, the reality is that men still retain privileged access to education, employment and control of economic resources, with more disparities in rural areas than in cities[18]. Interestingly, the same attitudes shape the roles of Eritrean women in the diaspora, although for some, their new-found gender roles have encouraged them to pursue higher education and professional careers. Men in their capacity as husbands and fathers continue to wield significant amount of power and privilege but are more open to the educational and professional development of their wives, daughters, and sisters. The challenge may often come up in sharing power, especially at the community level.

In the diaspora, girls and boys are less subjected to the old ways. Even though girls are conditioned to participate in household tasks, with family roles changing, some families increasingly expect boys to help out with household chores, such as cleaning, dishwashing, etc. Furthermore, the fact that girls and boys in the diaspora are exposed to diverse multi-cultural values through their socialization at school and elsewhere allows them to question the "old ways" of their parents. Although this research did not include youths under the age of 16, most of the youths interviewed were raised in Canada and could attest to the fact that they did not understand some of the cultural values and practices upheld by their families. As such, some indicated that they felt caught between two different worlds.

Sex-Disaggregated Data

The following observations were deduced from the online survey data. Due to the limited sample size of 57, variances for each indicator should be read with caution.

- **Respondents' Gender Composition**

The figure below shows an impressive number of women who completed the online survey. The gender disparity here, although almost minimal, is probably attributed to the fact that women may have less access

[16] Rey, Cheryl and Susan Mckay, "Peacebuilding as a gendered process". *Journal of Social Issues* Vol 62, no. 1, pp. 141-153. (2006)
[17] Wilson, Amrit. 1991. *Women and the Eritrean Revolution – The Challenge Road,* New Jersey: The Red Sea Press
[18] http://www.skk.uit.no/WW99/papers/Matsuoka_Atsuko.pdf

to technology and the internet due to their varying levels of education, degree of interest in the research, time constraints based to personal and familial obligations. The demographics also indicate that most of the women who responded online were between the ages of 16-44.

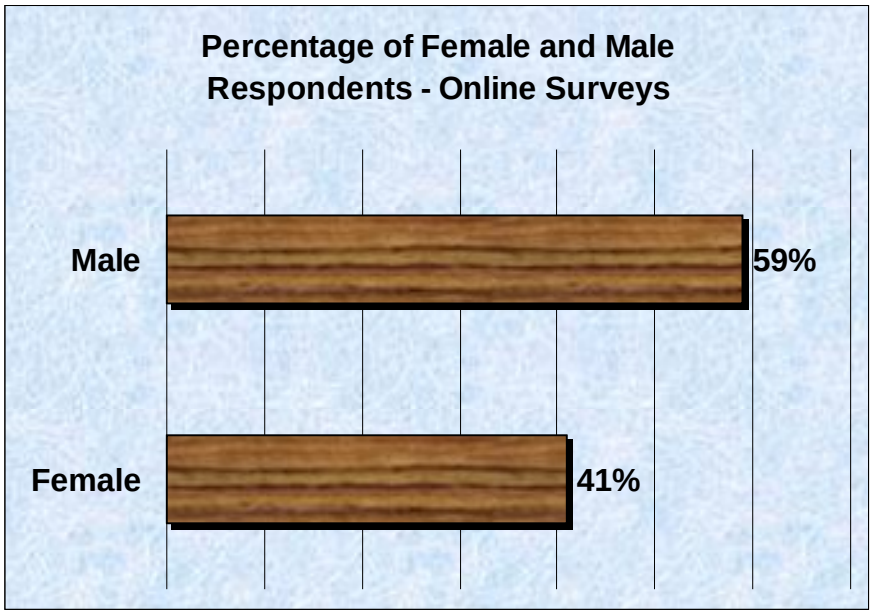

Figure 4

- **Seek help from community**

This indicator attempted to gauge how women and men feel about reaching out to the community to resolve any conflicts of personal, family and social nature. The results in general were very negative, with women indicating an uncompromising **No** at 100%, and 90% of men registering **No**. The fact that both sexes do not seek their community's assistance in resolving conflicts could be attributed to cultural beliefs, (taboo to expose one's own or one's family secrets and problems to outsiders), lack of trust, and absence of formal structures to accommodate the various needs of community members. In short, the findings show that the Diaspora community does not have a safe space for women, men, girls, and boys. It is also interesting to note, that 10% of the men report going to the community for conflict resolution. While the survey could not explore the reasons for this further from the respondents, it could be assumed that as long as the nature of the conflict was not sensitive, a small number of men felt a certain level of comfort in seeking help. On the other hand, women's reluctance to rely on their community highlight that they could be under pressure to keep to themselves any obstacles they may encounter.

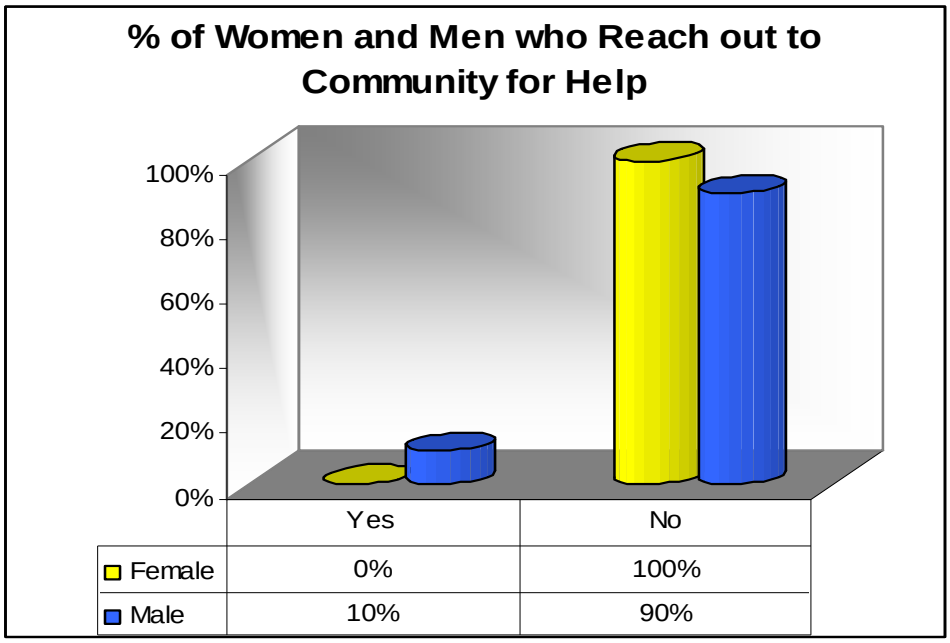

Figure 5

- **Level of Political Participation – Comparative Analysis**

Two questions were used in the online survey to measure the extent to which women and men are involved in political issues related to Eritrea and to their new country. The results here show that women remain active and interested in issues affecting their homeland. In fact, the survey results reveals that out of the 57 respondents, 26% of women are more involved in issues regarding Eritrea (89% women vs. 63%). On the other hand, compared to men, women are less active (at 22% vs. 43%) in the politics of their new country.

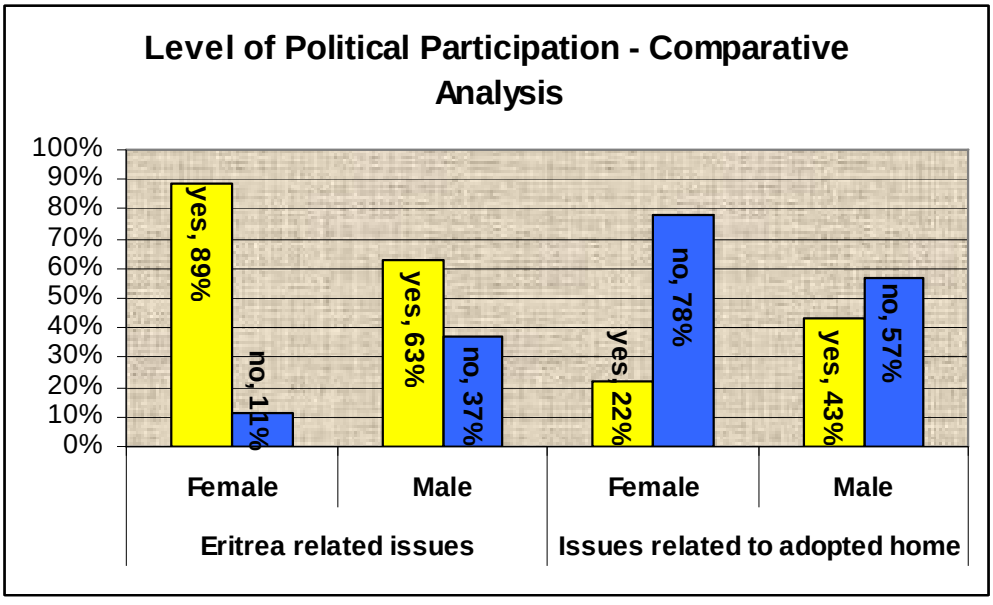

Figure 6

Gender Gaps by Level of Vulnerability and Capacity within the framework of Peacebuilding in the Eritrean Diaspora Community[19]

The following matrix is adapted to the needs of the research, owing to the fact that certain assumptions were made in the methodology and approach. It was assumed for instance that all participants' basic needs pertaining to their physical and material well-being were already addressed. Time constraints and the scope of the study largely dictated the themes that would be explored. The Vulnerabilities will thus look into the challenges women and men face, whereas the Capacities category will address their strengths in contributing to peacebuilding and community development.

	Vulnerabilities		Capacities	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
Physical/ Material	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a
Social / Organizational	- lack of safe community spaces - little assimilation to new country's mainstream society - no trust in mainstream conflict resolution mechanisms	- Focus on differences - no formal community structures - lack of leadership and mentoring ability especially for youths with opposing views	- participate in organizing support for others in need (cook, etc..) - can rely on the support of the community for weddings, funerals, etc.. - support on close female friends and family to resolve conflicts	- participate in formal and informal community activities - have historical knowledge, mediation experience - willing to provide guidance - Involved in their children's sports activities
Motivational / Attitudinal	- No trust in community - Caught between traditional and modern gender roles - Fear of getting involved - Sense of frustration and feeling overwhelmed - Feel unappreciated	- Limited trust in community - More resistant to changes in gender roles - Loss of hope in new generation - No understanding of younger generation	- interested in issues related to peace - willing to volunteer and participate in community activities - understand the pressures their children face in school and in the larger society and most are open to listen to their children	- connected to economic and political issues of home country and adopted country

[19] Adapted from Rising from the Ashes. Anderson and Row. Westview Press. 1989. and Women's Equality and Empowerment Framework. UNICEF. 1993

Underlying Causes of Vulnerabilities/ Level of Capacity	- conservative social norms and rules marginalizing women's roles and responsibilities - constrained by hearsay	- traditional views on gender roles - perceptions of fragmented community	- need to stick to each other in a new country - concerned about their children's future	- concerned about their children's future
Measures needed to address these gaps and vulnerabilities and differences in capacity	- establish safe spaces - create structures that support women's needs - learn how to resolve differences without taking issues personal	- learn to capitalize on similarities and celebrate differences - find healthy ways of exploring divergent opinions	- open dialogue - encourage women role models to mentor younger women - leadership and empowerment training	- leadership skills training - find ways of sharing knowledge in constructive ways

Table 2

VII. Recommendations (Opportunities)

- **Regional Peacebuilding & Partnerships.** An active Eritrean Diaspora in Canada can be an asset for extending peacebuilding work in the Horn of Africa. If the different communities (Ethiopian, Somali, and Eritrean) can work together in looking for ways to build peace, then this culture or "social capital" can be transferred and used for attaining regional peace and stability as well.

- **Deliver Coordinated Outreach to New Immigrants.** Immigrants to Toronto arrive in one of the most diverse cities in the world. Although the challenges of integrating recent immigrants in society is one that faces all communities, the work can be less daunting when there is cohesiveness among and between different segments of the diaspora community.

- **Addressing Generational Gaps.** Workshops and dialogue that help narrow down the communication gap between parents and their children are strongly recommended. In the workshop, parents and youth can learn conflict resolution techniques which will help them in identifying the root cause of generational gaps and the conflict that can arise from them.

- **Understanding Commonalities and Respecting Differences.** The use of history and cultural heritage as a guide: recalling the past in order to understand the present and envision the future, in other words, seeking what strengthens and unites rather than what divides.

- **Build the capacity of the diaspora to support peacebuilding at different levels.** (*see* Appendix 12, page 46). Capacity building and training supports should aim at the individual, group/network and community levels. For example, **Leadership programs** should enable community leaders to lead the community with specific objectives and purposes to stir it to a common goal where community-based peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives allow the divided community to address its issues. Leadership training initiatives must take into account needs and interests of women, men and youth.

- **Conflict-resolution Training.** Leaders need to receive adequate training in peace, community conflict resolution, organizing, communication, etc.

- **Project Planning and Implementation:** For community based activities for children; Education programs for adults coping with Canadian social and political culture; Youth mentoring programs and activities; support for *youth groups* and access to resources in peace and conflict resolution training

- **Dialogue.** Create a safe space for community members to have dialogue on issues of peace and peacebuilding.

- **Learning and Dissemination.** Build on the momentum of this participatory action research by creating opportunities for learning and dissemination within the community and across communities, both at the local and international levels.

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X. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Survey Questionnaire

Research Ethics - all responses are confidential. Privacy is assured.

Demographics:

1) Name (or, Anonymous) –

2) Gender: Male or Female?

3) Age: a) 16 – 24 b) 25 – 34 c) 35 – 44 d) 45 – 54 e) 55 – 64 f) above 65

4) Marital Status: a) married b) single

5) Family (# of Children):

6) Were you born in Eritrea? a) Yes b) No

7) Born outside Eritrea – where?

5) When did you leave Eritrea?

6) Have you ever been back to Eritrea?

Community Involvement:

1) Tell us about your current position **in /with** the community? Do you feel connected?

2) If you are not involved in community work, why not? How do you stay connected to your community?

3) What do you think are the benefit, results, risks and costs of been involved in a community work? What gain, if any, do you see coming from your work, both for you and for others?

4) What are your thoughts about the cohesiveness/unity of the Eritrean communities? What do you think contributes to this situation? Can you list or name the various Eritrean organizations and/or groups currently operating in Toronto?

5) In what ways do you think the community is effective? Do you think the community could learn from the experience of other Diaspora communities?

Timeline A) Before independence B) 1991-1997 C) 1998-Present (after Border war)

6) How do you define political activity? Do you see yourself as politically active? Why or why not

7) Do you think that Eritreans in the Diaspora are connected directly or indirectly to the present political situation in Eritrea? Does the political atmosphere in Eritrea shape the activity of the Diaspora community here?

Peace and Peacebuilding:

8) Do you think Eritreans have had an experience of peace to refer to? Do you remember peaceful times in Eritrea or in the community in Diaspora? Please describe them.

9) In your own words, describe what peace and peacebuilding mean to you?

10) What approaches do you think are most successful in community peacebuilding and conflict resolution? What are the barriers?

11) What do you think are required to **sustain** community-based peacebuilding?

Conflict:

12) Do you view the community as a place you can turn to for conflict resolution? Do you go to the community if you have family, financial, social, health and other personal problems? Are you comfortable turning to your community for help?

13) Do you think there is conflict in our community at large? If so, what do you see as the sources of conflict in our community? And what type of conflict do you think exist?

14) How do you think the community deals with conflict? Has it changed over the years in its approaches to conflict resolution?

15) Do you see conflict here in the Diaspora as a reflection or extension of conflicts in Eritrea and vice versa?

16) How do you define your role in Eritrea as a Diaspora Eritrean?

Appendix 2- Focus Group Questionnaire

Survey questions	Men respondents	Women respondents
How do we define peace within the Eritrean context?		
What are the main challenges?		
What has been the impact of the above mention issues on the communities in Diaspora?		

Appendix 3 – Role and Accountability Analysis Framework

GROUP 1: Female & Male Youth Ages 16-34,
Completed or Currently attending university or college in Toronto

Community Segment	Perception of Peace in the context of the Eritrean Diaspora	Roles and Responsibility in Peacebuilding and Community Development	Challenges faced by community segment	Strategies for Peacebuilding and Community Development
Youth Female & Male Age group: 16-34 Occupation/ Education level: Completed or Currently attending university or college in Toronto	- Absence of war - Setting up dialogue (like this initiative with SPN) - Freedom to share ideas - Absence of paranoia - Constant search for peace of mind, cyclical - Point of reference for peace is Eritrea's independence - People of differing cultures co-existing in a cohesive community - Compromise and patience	- to put Eritrea on the map - to connect with fellow Eritreans - to understand the Eritrean history and culture - get involved in community programs/events by volunteering, serving on boards, and providing support - establishing and participating actively in youth associations - become aware of global and geo-political issues	- Feel overwhelmed when trying to volunteer, as expectation is too high - Volunteering for community becomes more about the activity as opposed to learning about being an Eritrean, of Eritrea's history, etc.. - Generation based divisions, can not really relate to parents' childhood experiences - Pride, lack of humility - Too much focus on differences - Not building community based programs: - Ethnicity, colourism, "shadism" - Conflict resolution is dealt by imploding, inability to deal with disagreements - Control of direction of activism - Most youths not willing to get involved in community related events, no connection	- Learn from other Diaspora communities like Somalis (who have asserted themselves and made it clear that they belong here), Sri Lankans (who are engaged in Canadian politics and support each other) - Focus on surviving here - Ensure whatever help we provide is relevant to the needs of the community - Develop programs for battered women, for people suffering of mental health, etc - Provide legal services - need to figure out whether to go back to settle or stay here - create professional network - understand global history, politics and economic policies and their impact on a small country like Eritrea - become a conscious global citizen but find ways of helping and supporting Eritrea

Appendix 4 – Role and Accountability Analysis Framework

GROUP 2: Female Women Ages 35-55+
Homemakers & Working Mothers

Community Segment	Perception of Peace in the context of the Eritrean Diaspora	Roles and Responsibility in Peace building and Community Development	Challenges faced by Community Segment	Strategies for peacebuilding and community development
Women Age Group: 35 – 55+ Occupation: Homemakers Working mothers	-No war, no killing, no religious division -Peace is having patience, tolerance, and respect- we are missing all that now -If you can not live in peace with those who live with you, how can you work in peace with others? -Peace is freedom- to do what ever one wish and go where ever one wishes to go -Peace an essential component in Eritrean community development - At the most basic level, it means being able to meet basic needs (food, shelter, etc..) and at the highest level, it implies some degree of freedom, thereby envisaging a life free of injustice, discrimination, oppression and violence	-Changing our view and mind set -Start change with in yourself -peace -Prioritizing our need- political opinions and religion are secondary -We are one society, are living as one there fore should stick for one another -We should not get influenced by current changing "political flow" Or politicians -Come to the table and discuss peace -There is no "impossible" to do!	-People are demoralized -People are slowly but surely giving up - Total lack of understanding and dialogue among groups -misunderstanding or undefined goals and objectives -We have lack of leadership and guidance -Poverty and sense of regional identity -Lack of knowledge and understanding of our past history -Political ideology based on past but not clear difference -Lack of justices and respect for individuals -Lack of understanding between individual opinion and the persons back ground -If you have different idea you are less nationalist -Our conflicts are reflection of what is happening at home country -Historical unsolved conflicts of people and political affiliations -Different views are considered as enemy rather than political opponents National ID is connected to government support or to the oppositions -Invisible regionalism	-Speak out. We tend not to talk about the real situation here in Diaspora community for fear of being labeled -Educate ourselves in to how to be good role model for our kids. The youth are getting mixed messages regarding political issues and what it means to be an Eritrean Canadian. -Women are instrumental in eradicating narrow minded definition of Eritrea and Eritreans- positive mental nurturing starts at home! - recruit the services of competent and intellectual leaders to draft clear goal and purposes for the community -Conduct more research and document the history of the Diaspora community for future reference (one has to learn both from mistakes and improvement).

Appendix 5 – Role and Accountability Analysis Framework

GROUP 3: Females Ages 25-44,
Born & Raised in Ethiopia,
Professionals

Community Segment	Perception of Peace in the context of the Eritrean Diaspora	Roles and Responsibility in Peace building and Community Development	Challenges faced by Community Segment	Strategies for peacebuilding and community development
Group born/raised in Ethiopia Women Age Group: 25-44 Occupation: Professionals	- Peace is working from within - Respect each other's opinions - Freedom to responsibly express oneself - *''peace, in my opinion, should be the ability to live and pursue your goals without threat. Peacebuilding should be the establishment of structures and institutions promoting security and liberty, equitable resource distribution''*	- to volunteer in community activities, especially as parents - find ways of giving back to the community, especially when others are fully engaged in providing coaching in sports activities and teaching Tigrinya language to children - serve as role models	- as Eritreans from Ethiopia, feel left out, no sense of belonging to one particular group - feels like place of birth could hinder community participation - do not feel appreciated - lack of trust - feel that there are many degrees of being "Eritrean" depending on one's connections, ties to home country, ideological stand, and level of contribution	- Be better listeners - Stop shifting blame - Take responsibility - Develop clear goals and objectives - Explore meaningful ways of interacting and strengthening relationships with each other and other social groups - Nurture our children's interest and knowledge in relation to community leadership - Learn to appreciate differences and capitalize on diversity as well as on collective resources

Appendix 6 – Role and Accountability Analysis Framework

GROUP 4: Males Ages 35-55+
Various Occupations

Community Segment	Perception of Peace in the context of the Eritrean Diaspora	Roles and Responsibility in Peace building and Community Development	Challenges faced by Community Segment	Strategies for peacebuilding and community development
Men Age Group: 35 – 55+ Occupation: Occupation:	-Living tighter -Community without conflict -sharing our happiness and sadness -Love and understanding -RESPECT -Leadership, support and unity -Communities getting alone with one anther - Acceptance, communication and giving up being right - The social atmosphere in which all parties respect each other's rights, similarities as well as differences while actively seeking ways of sustaining this delicate balance.	We need to speak out for peace -We need to learn more about Canada and Canadian culture - We need to participate in leadership positions -We must start reflecting on the past and move forward to unit our community beyond	-Lack of knowledge of our history -Lack of leadership and sense of direction -Ignorance -Lack of resources -Individuals that have decided to be the spoke person for everyone make it hard for others to participate in peace process -ELF and EPLF bad history -Bad historical relationship between different factions of people -No cultural background of different political views or attitudes -Regional and religion division with clear divide -Generation gap between leaders, fighters and the new generation of youth - Government, opposition parties and those who are influencing public opinions have a major role in this conflicts within the community -Division caused due to colonization as well as wars	-Respect each other -Exchange Ideas and views even it means the are radically different from ours -Our children must get proper guidance in their education -We need to adjust to the Canadian system -Influence political leadership by participating in ideas -We need more educated women in leadership positions -We need to bring in our old traditional values to speak to each other with respect and kindness

Appendix # 7

Personal Reflection on Peacebuilding and Development
(Professional Female, 32 years old)

Like most Eritreans who was born in Eritrea but grew up outside Eritrea, my understanding of peace was inevitably marred by the never-ending war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which at the time was considered to be more of a provincial problem for Ethiopia but a struggle for self-determination for Eritrea. With two patriotic parents who constantly expressed their concern and grief because of the war, of its tragic impact on the home they left behind, and of loved ones they kept on loosing to the struggle, peace, in my mind, was indeed an intangible and an almost impossible phenomenon.

Reflecting back, I had a fairly conservative religious upbringing, where my brother and I were taught that being good and obedient would earn us an eternal life on a peaceful earth. Taking stock of all the mish-mash information I gathered on peace from all the different sources, I somehow put together that peace was no easy task, but more of an ideal, if not a lofty aspiration. That's why it was completely justifiable for me that peace came at a price, which to me was mostly associated with being and doing good. This however does not mean that I do not see the dark side of the price as well; the sacrifice of thousands of lives in the name of peace. However, in this case, I will limit this price to the personal dedication, passion and hard-work that many devote to community development, often with the unspoken vow to promote peace and create a better place for mankind, whatever risk that involves. Peace doesn't thus exist in a vacuum but relies on relationships bound by mutual respect, justice, love, unity, and a sense of equality and freedom. I could go on and list all the virtues that tighten the social fabric of civil societies in the most positive light but then that would end up sounding like a smorgasbord of wishes and fantasies that would simply render the notion of peace more elusive. Instead, I would rather focus on what constitutes the essence of peace for me, which is the undeniable link between peacebuilding and development. After all, my roots can not but agree that this connection is almost real.

From an early age, I witnessed my nurse mother mobilizing her community members at our 'kebele' where she volunteered tirelessly to raise awareness on health issues. I saw her and her friend motivate people to live cleanly, to improve their hygiene and sometimes even clean together the hall where the meetings took place. To me, that could only foster harmony and a sense of belonging, encouraging people to understand that community work could ultimately change their lives for the better. A seed was thus planted in my sub-conscious, although I had no knowledge of it for a long time. My professional career later involved working with women in a conflict zone, a country whose woes the world preferred to forget; Somalia. The scale of damage that the war inflicted on every resident's life, especially women and children, was astounding and overwhelming. Where does one begin the healing journey? The casualties of war are not only those who die, but those who survive it with the hope that peace will one day be part of their reality. This is almost an illusion, for, most simply hang on dangerously to their past and can no longer imagine the taste of freedom and peace.

How does one even go about peacebuilding in a context where unimaginable crimes of war and gender-based violence have taken place, and continue to occur? Where is the fairness, the justice, the empathy?

Does development work have even a chance at re-establishing some form of peace? The saddest part is that in such a fluid state, peace becomes a relative term. Human beings are somehow endowed with the ability to accept the sub-standard as normal depending on their daily experiences. Within the context of war, what peace meant to a woman yesterday may have been being able to find shelter or to move around as safe as possible. The next day, peace may take on a different meaning where this woman may only be concerned of having access to food for her family or just for herself.

So, I learnt some lessons on peacebuilding and development, based on my own experiences; that peace comes from within the self as much as it is affected by external factors, that the balance between maintaining peace and development work is very fine (by this I mean that working with one community group could come across as bias or exclusive to another group, hence jeopardizing the possibility of peace), that peace work requires a systematic and sustained approach, that peace is indeed fragile and an irresistible prey to violence; that peace requires constant dialogue, willingness to communicate and actively listen and understand; that peace only lives within the sanctity of selflessness and justice; that development can only bear fruit when the small successes of peacebuilding are preserved and celebrated; and that peacebuilding and development do not have expiry dates but are rather ever evolving and continuous processes that demand our concerted and pro-active efforts.

My recent trip to Asmara opened my eyes further that for the inhabitants of the city, peace will only be possible with a final and binding end to the border war with Ethiopia, where young people no longer need to flee their country in search of better [or more peaceful] life. To the rural Eritrean, peace means being able to farm his land with the help of his sons who are currently tied up in protecting their country. After all, there seemed to be general agreement that someone had to guard this hard-won nation. But the unmistakable smell of hope lingers in every conversation, that somehow, maybe, tomorrow may usher in a new and hopefully, worry-free and peaceful day.

And this has made me rethink my role in peacebuilding and development, that as person who abhors violence and discrimination but lives in a relatively peaceful diasporic environment, a challenge is put to my conscience to conquer my own inhibitions and fears, to revisit my relationship with my community as well as my understanding and appreciation of peace.

Appendix #8
My Reflection on Peace Building
(Female Student, 23 years old)

I believe that to have peace or to engage in peacebuilding there must be an absence of oppression and domination in all forms. In the context of peacebuilding within the Eritrean Community, an honest delve must be taken to explore current and historic conflicts. By doing this we will see that many of these conflicts are a result of colonial exploitation. The catastrophic impacts of European Imperialism has stripped the African continent and the diaspora of much more than economic resources and human populations (although the numbers in both regards are staggering). It has, through the legacy of colonialism, categorically denied African peoples access to life-sustaining resources through the exploitation that is capitalism. The right to self-determination has not and cannot be realized by any oppressed people until the racist oppression of white supremacy is stopped. It is therefore for us to realize that peace-building must never be the will of the dominant group imposed on people within conflict regions as has been the case with Canadian Peace keepers in the Somalia conflict of 1993 and the ongoing mission in Afghanistan. Western Ideology would dictate a uniform model of peace and peace building but it is clear that this hegemonic approach to peace will surely fail as it does not incorporate the will of the people.

Eritrea's history is one of that is full of a great struggle and resistance. It is this resilience that led us to Independence and victory over colonial powers. While internal strife is common in most nations and has definitely had an ominous presence in Eritrean communities worldwide, it is important to realize that the peace process is a long one and cannot be over simplified. Differences between Eritrean (politically, religiously, and ethnically) must not be used to as a catalyst to further divisions and social unrest. Unity on the basis of a shared vision for betterment is required for people to realize that political involvement is as necessary as breathing if we are to build communities that will have the wherewithal for further development.

Peace cannot only be understood as the absence of war. It also cannot be taken to mean unity only under the threat of a predetermined common enemy. As we can see with many world conflicts today, namely the war in Iraq, the Israel- Lebanon conflict, and the crisis in Darfur, we see that often the creation of a common enemy only works to pacify the masses and almost always serve to the economic and political benefit of those hold power. All forms of domination and oppression must be eradicated in order for peace to be created and sustained. Only then will communities, Eritrean and otherwise, be able to fully engage in a peace building process that will work toward security, equality, and human dignity for all.

Appendix #9
Reflection on Peace and the SPN project
(Female Student, 21 years old)

Ill be honest and say that until starting this project, I really didn't think peace was something attainable. Peace of mind, ok. Inner-peace, umm… Ok. But peace in the sense that we are trying to achieve, not so much. But in-order for me to be part of this project I would have to believe that our ultimate goal, is, in actuality attainable, otherwise would this not just be a waste of time?

When asked to write this reflection about my opinion of peace and this project, I really didn't know what my definition of peace was. It was like I didn't know what peace itself was. In trying to define it, I only did so by defining what it was not. Peace is the absence of war; peace is the absence of anxiety. Could it be that I can only define peace in this way because I have no example of peace to look to? I'd think so. I mean ever since I was a child, born in Canada, raised in Canada, and I would ask about my country I was told about groups fighting for land that was rightfully there own, people fighting for things that I took for granted everyday. Shown pictures of aunts and uncles, cousins, and long time family friends who were missing, ill both physically and mentally, while the majority were dead. Growing up, I didn't think of Eritrea as a peaceful place. I thought of it as a place whose people had no real experience with peace. People who have come to Canada now attempting to make a change, a better place for themselves, their families, and their people. People who have no idea of peace, trying to attain it here? Hmm…

I have been part of a small part of the Eritrean community in Toronto for all my life. I love my people, and I love doing what I can to help when needed. But since 1997, I can honestly say that my community has really let me down. It was here when we officially divided. When we, for whatever reason, thought we could be a more powerful community, as a divided one. When the ECAO was established, was when I was sure the future of the Eritrean community in Toronto would not be pleasant. Not because of what they do, or what they stand for, but because that solidified the division for me. At first I though the break was just a fight, like the disobedient middle-child trying to make a point, but I was wrong. Since then the problem has only gotten worse. The division between groups is so bad that Eritrea's are going to communities outside of our own for assistant, Ethiopian and Somali. Despite being fed up with what was going on within the groups, I remained a member of every Eritrean group I could, supporting how I could, while at the same time encouraging others to do so, as I felt our parents' political rifts were DIRECTLY impacting us as youth, and our relations with our brothers and sisters here. This was the only way I knew how to make a change, a small one. Despite doing this for many years I still remained hopeless, frustrated, and annoyed at the constant bickering, name calling, and childlike behaviour by our elders. The reason I joined this project was because I see this as the last straw. I don't think change can come unless people who care can come together and make change happen. Our community has deep rooted issues that will never be erased, but our fathers and mothers need to understand that forgiveness and the desire to work hard together, is the only way anything productive can happen in our community.

My goal for this project is for it to be the start for discussion within the community, and I don't just mean gossip. The fact that it is being done by the youth, people who for the most part want to see our community grow without any past issues impeding us. I know we have a strong group who is willing to cooperate with the researchers for the successful completion of the project, I just hope this ends as a catalyst for change, something we are in desperate need of.

Appendix 10 : Post-Research Community Feedback

- **Research Methodology**
  Community members thought that the number of online respondents was not representative of the community and that graphs and other quantitative data presentations could be misleading. Suggestions were made to frame the paper as a preliminary qualitative research.

- **Objectivity in Research**
  Community members noted that an objective voice is necessary for community participation at all levels. Objective social research was viewed as an important precursor and platform for community development.

- **Leading Questions**
  There were some concerns that some of the online survey questions were leading, as they were seen to assume that conflict existed already in the community. We acknowledged that this may have been perceived as such, but clarified that the five Diaspora communities selected by UPEACE were pre-determined as having a need for capacity building in peace and conflict resolution.

- **The Eritrean Youth Coalition (EYC)**
  Questions arose regarding the youth participants and what groups they represented as a coalition. Some concerns were that EYC members were not officially representing their organisation, which undermines the status of the coalition. EYC members acknowledged this concern and noted that EYC was just in its beginning phases and addressed the reasons why the EYC would function better as a coalition of individuals with different opinions as opposed to a coalition of representatives. The EYC members thought that individuals would not replicate the existing conflicts inherent in the Eritrean community, particularly among different organisations. The expectations of the Eritrean diaspora youth to exercise leadership are immense. Adults want them to assume leadership even though there is a tendency to steer and direct the youth.

- **Comparison of Findings**
  The community was interested to see if we compared our findings with the four other communities involved in the UPEACE research project. We acknowledge that this is an important step forward and that the findings will be compared during the UPEACE Expert Forum.

- **Identification of Sources of Conflict**
  There were questions on whether the research succeeded in identifying specific sources of conflict, and in particular, why certain type of conflicts are found in the Diaspora community when they do not exist back home. We used information found in our literature review to explain possible causes.

- **What is the next step?**
  Community members were eager to learn about future projects and the next step/phase of the Selam Peacebuilding Network (SPN). This was especially clear after the discussions regarding the initial findings. Overall interest in building sustainable capacity in the Eritrean Diaspora was evident.

- **Recommendations from Community Members**
  Community members felt that a better use of media would help spread the message of SPN. The dissemination of information via TV, internet, Meftih newspaper and radio were mentioned. Furthermore, people agreed with the need to develop leadership capacity via leadership training in the Eritrean Diaspora. More research was recommended in all aspects (education, health- i.e. HIV/AIDS, poverty reduction, Canadian political participation, employment counselling and job skills training, professional networking, settlement issues etc.) The need for research in order to contextualize the Diaspora is even greater given that statistics for the population in the Eritrean Diaspora are old and unreliable.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Appendix #11- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is Selam Peacebuilding Network?
SPN is a new *non-partisan* network of individuals who came together to implement the first community-based peacebuilding research project in the Eritrean Diaspora.

2. What is the University for Peace (UPEACE)?
UPEACE is a United Nations-mandated University established in December 1980 as a Treaty Organization by the UN General Assembly. UPEACE Canada (International Centre) is located in Toronto.

3. What is the project and how did it start?
SPN responded to a call for proposals by UPEACE. The title of SPN's project is "**The Role of the Eritrean Diaspora in Peacebuilding and Development – Challenges and Opportunities"** and has targeted the Eritrean Diaspora in Canada, mainly in the Toronto and surrounding areas, Hamilton and Ottawa.

4. Why has UPEACE funded this project?
UPEACE funded the project as part of its *Diaspora and Peacebuilding* thematic programme activities. Four other communities have undertaken similar research (Colombian, Afghan, Ethiopian and Jamaican).

5. What was the level of support for the project?
The project received $10,000 funding from UPEACE. Community members supported the project by actively participating in focus groups, interviews, online surveys, and by encouraging the project team and youth peers.

6. Who are the research project Team members?
Kisanet Tezare, Tsehay Said, Dr Daniel Baheta, Helen W. Tewolde, and Amanuel Melles

7. Who are the youth peers and what was their role?
The youth peers are members of the newly formed *Eritrean Youth Coalition* (EYC). They played a key role in brainstorming the research questions, gathering primary data via key informant interviews in the community, identifying potential challenges and obstacles in the research (and offering solutions) and, most importantly, reflecting deeply on and sharing their own experiences as diaspora Eritreans in Canada.

8. What will happen after the research project is completed?
The process and results of the research will be shared and discussed with members of other diaspora communities within Canada via Final Report. It will also be distributed through electronic means to UPEACE's international network of partner institutions of learning, civil society organizations, etc.

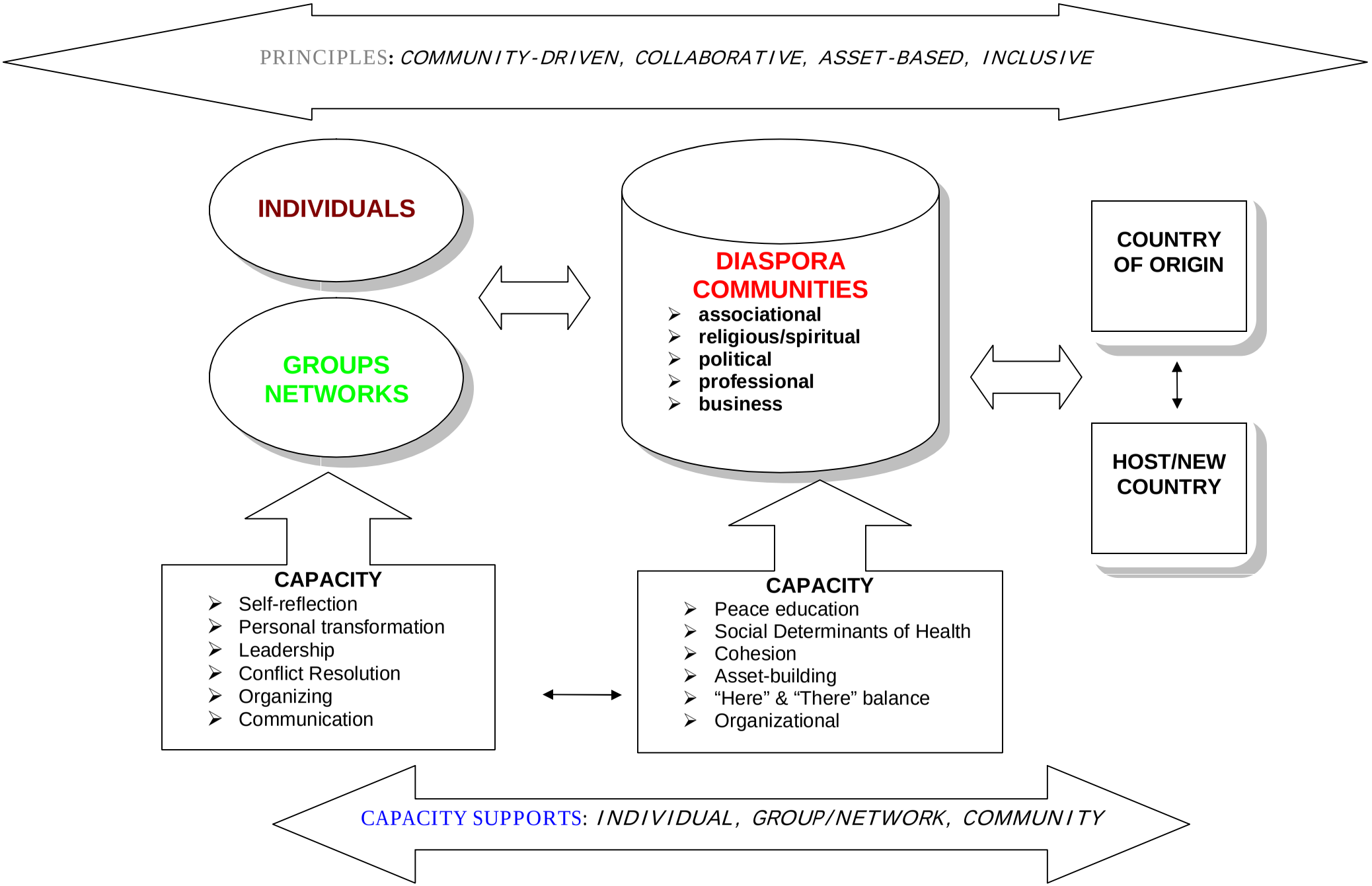
9. **How can I participate in the future?**

Depending on the interest of diaspora Eritreans, some recommendations of the research may offer opportunities for future engagement. We will inform the community regarding any possibilities for future involvement. For further questions & information, contact us

Selam Peacebuilding Network (SPN):

selampeacenet@gmail.com

Appendix 12: A Diaspora Community Capacity For Peacebuilding Framework



Youth Perspectives:
Challenges to Peace Building and Development in the Ethiopian Community

Research study conducted

By

Young Diplomats

Young Diplomats
www.youngdiplomats.org

Name: Alpha Abebe
Educational background: Bachelor of Arts- Major Political Science, Major Criminology
- Final Year at the University of Toronto

Interests: Alpha has a passion for youth and a passion for education. She advocates for open opportunities for youth of all backgrounds and economic statuses, and hopes to pursue a career that will enable her to create such opportunities when none are in place. Learning excites her and she aims to pass this excitement on to other youth in her community.

Perspectives: Alpha became involved in this project because of her involvement with the Young Diplomats. More importantly however, she feels strongly about the underdeveloped research surrounding new immigrant populations, such as the Ethiopian community, especially with regards to the implications of their migrant and settlement experience. She discovered this literature gap in a research endeavor that she undertook through her criminology program where she found little to nothing written about the Ethiopian Diaspora. Considering an estimated population of 30,000+ in Toronto alone, she believes that knowledge of the needs and challenges faced by the Ethiopian community is integral not only to its community members, but also to the city as a whole. Alpha hopes to continue contributing to this literature as her academic career advances.

Name: Ruth Amanuel
Education background:
Hon Bachelor of Arts- Major Political Science, Minor Economics and Spanish

Work: Volunteer Coordinator, United Way of Toronto

Interests: International Issues-Child Rights and Organizational Capacity Building

Perspectives: Ruth was drawn to this project as she is interested in understanding how current challenges or opportunities facing Ethiopian youth in Canada hampers or fosters connection with their homeland. She was intrigued to hear from first or second generation what contributes to their cultural connection to Ethiopia

Name: Eman Jamie

Educational background: BA in Broadcast journalism at Ryerson University.

Work experience. Print and Visual Research Assistant at CTV

Interests: Eman is an active member at the Harari Heritage Centre where she volunteered her time to raise awareness about the scarcity of water in the Harar region of Ethiopia. She has also been a volunteer report for the local Ethiopian broadcast *ADMAS* for the past three years. She has also volunteered at the Evergreen Public Relations Office where hse played a vital role in editing and documenting data for the centre.

Perspectives: Eman is no stranger to the Ethiopian community and became interested in this peace building project with Young Diplomats due to her continued interest in community building projects.

Name: Eskender Mekonnen

Education Background: Anthropology, B.A. (McMaster), Int'l Relations and Development, Minor in Economics, Hon. B.A., (U. of Windsor) and M.A. Candidate (U. of Windsor)—Topic: HIV/AIDS policy in Ethiopia.

Work : Research Assistant to a Professor at U. of Windsor who is conducting major research on Int'l Health.

Interests: Research in the Social Sciences— as he recalls his challenges passing through the Canadian school system, Eskender strongly believes that he is able to assist current (immigrant) secondary school youths by sharing his experiences. He is also interested in examining how governments in developing countries respond to various public concerns/issues surrounding health. Additionally, he has a passion for international politics, particularly African (Horn) politics.

Perspectives: Eskender has had many opportunities to engage in research projects both here and internationally. In 2005 he gained a CIDA internship to conduct research in Ethiopia. He is also always interested in learning more about the Ethiopian diaspora which is demonstrated in his activeness in the Ethiopian community in Toronto. He feels that this particular project combines both of his passions: working with youth, and conducting research. As one of the founding members of the Young Diplomats (YD), he strongly believes in its mission and looks forward to the outcomes of the research as being a positive way to create programs for youth in the Greater Toronto Area.

Name: Maraki Fikre Merid

Education background: B.Sc. (Biochemistry from McGill University) and M.Sc. (Epidemiology from University of Toronto)

Work experience: Maraki is currently a senior health analyst at the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). She is involved in special health care projects at the national level that look into a variety of health care issues and policies in Canada. Her main expertise revolves around developing the methodology behind research projects, analysis and report writing. She has extensive research experience in previous employments where she developed and conducted various research projects under the department of Public health sciences of the University of Toronto as well as through volunteer and internship work here in Canada and elsewhere.

Interests: Her main interests can be summarized as being international health and Public Health Sciences. Her research interests usually focus on HIV/AIDS but also revolve around developmental issues and its impact on people from developing countries.

Perspectives: This project fits perfectly with Maraki's interests outlined above. She has always thought of the youth as being a key resource to tap into. She hopes to bring into this project some of her expertise in research and analysis as well as her endless enthusiasm for this type of work.

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Preface

Young Diplomats (YD) is a dynamic youth-led organization, which strives to be a resourceful and inspiring presence for the Ethiopian youth in the Greater Toronto Area. To that end, YD undertook a participatory research project entitled *Youth Perspectives: Challenges to Peacebuilding and Development in the Ethiopian Community.* The study assessed the needs of Ethiopian youth and the prospects of engaging them in peacebuilding and development efforts. Once the research is completed, YD intends to address one or more of the identified needs through the implementation of innovative programs and activities accessible to the youth in the Ethiopian community.

The following document provides an insight into the experiences of Ethiopian youth between the ages of 14 to 29 living in the Greater Toronto Area. The paper attempts to highlight challenges faced by the youth that hinder them from a successful integration into the Canadian society at large. Additionally, it uncovers opportunities that exist for grassroots level intervention to meet the group's needs. With the understanding that the concepts of peacebuilding and development are quite subjective and malleable to fit different ends, we have defined these terms in the way that they are relevant to this study.

The following definition, taken from a *Conflict Research Consortium* at the University of Colorado, suits the purpose and outcomes of this paper. The Consortium defines peacebuilding as "the process of restoring normal relations between people…[and that peacebuilding] requires the reconciliation of differences, apology and forgiveness of past harm, and the establishment of a cooperative relationship between groups, replacing the adversarial or competitive relationship that used to [and/or continues to] exist."[1]

This definition is relevant to the case of the Ethiopian community in Toronto to the extent that it is composed of an entire generation that emigrated for the specific purpose of escaping conflict (this is discussed further in the literature review below). Historically, state

and social actors have capitalized on the diverse ethnic composition of Ethiopia to fuel power struggles, social movements and economic battles. Many who immigrated to Canada carried the resentment they had towards each other with them; created by the building tensions among different groups in Ethiopia. One part of this research looks into how much of this has been internalized by Ethiopian youth. Most of the research looks at the effects of social upheaval on broader social indicators of a healthy community. The term development, in this paper, is used to mean the empowerment of the youth in Toronto—socially, politically and economically, so that they can meaningfully contribute to the peacebuilding and development initiatives in Ethiopia.

Accordingly, this paper's intended audiences are Ethiopian parents, researchers, teachers, activists, immigration workers, policy makers, as well as youth groups within and outside the community:

- **Parents/Guardians**—this paper is a valuable tool for them, as it enables parents/guardians to understand challenges youth face; hence bridging the intergenerational gap by creating dialogue.
- **Researchers**—though this research is small in scope and preliminary in its depth, we strongly believe that it is invaluable because of its novelty and ability to identify issues that require further studies.
- **Teachers**—this document assists them in understanding challenges that are experienced uniquely by Ethiopian youth, improving interactions in classrooms.
- **Activists**—both at the community as well as at government level may benefit from this report if they so desire to lobby for proactive programs that deal with challenges confronted by Ethiopian youth.
- **Immigrant workers**—particularly those in the community would benefit greatly since the report highlights youth specific needs, which require youth-friendly approaches.

- **Policy makers**—where policy makers aim to implement meaningful legislation and social programming, this document gives them a reference as to the genuine needs of youth in the community.
- **Youth groups**—this paper is a useful resource to obtain, as it articulates a) specific issues that Ethiopian youth are facing; b) recommendations made by them in order to improve relations between themselves and their parents; c) changes that would help youth achieve their goals; and d) what inspires youth to dream. This is to place an emphasis on the fact that an effective youth group would gain great insights concerning what approaches to take with their group by understanding the challenges faced by the youth.

Though it is not necessary, your familiarity with Ethiopian history in the context of the country's regional and international roles would enhance your understanding of some of the themes that arise in this research. To that end, we feel that Richard Pankhurst's book entitled *The Ethiopians* (2001) would provide a quick, but not exhaustive, reference to the history of Ethiopia.

The questionnaires and focus groups developed for this research had specific research questions in mind. The following are the research objectives used at the preliminary stages as well as to inform the outputs and recommendations that complete this paper. The research aimed to:

- Explore the extent to which different social, political, economic, and cultural issues that Ethiopian youth face affect their ability or willingness to engage in peace building and development in the local community and in Ethiopia
- Explore the extent to which Ethiopian youth (second generation Ethiopians) have absorbed the social-political values of Canadian society and how this does or does not affect their engagement in peace and development issues in Ethiopia
- Gauge the overall level of political and civic engagement of Ethiopian youth in contrast to their parents
- Explore the extent to which the second generation Ethiopians (mainly youth) have internalized the political values and affiliations of their parents
- Assess the extent to which ethnic politics poses a challenge to peacebuilding and development in Ethiopia and within the Diaspora in Canada. Ask whether Ethio-Canadian youth have internalized this form of politics and whether it has led to conflict

in the community.
- Discuss the strengths and limitations of engaging Ethio-Canadian youth in peace building processes.

The report begins with a brief literature review on the Ethiopian Diaspora in the Greater Toronto Area. It continues with a discussion on youth connectedness to the Ethiopian community in Toronto as well as to Ethiopia. Following this, the discussion is furthered to include other challenges to peacebuilding and development both in Toronto and Ethiopia, as articulated by the youth respondents. The final segment of the report uncovers opportunities for, as well as recommendations to, peacebuilding and development. Each of the four sections in the paper begin with Youth Perspectives, which are quotes taken directly from the discussions in our focus groups. This is a unique opportunity to understand the experiences of Ethiopian youth through their direct thoughts.

Acknowledgements

Young Diplomats (YD) is grateful and feels honoured for being offered the opportunity to conduct this study. YD would like to express gratitude to the various institutions, organizations, and individuals without whom this study would not have been possible.

First and foremost, special thanks to the staff of University for Peace-Toronto, particularly Dr. Fayen d'Evie and Digafie Debalke (M.A.) for giving *Young Diplomats* the opportunity to voice Ethiopian youth experiences in the Greater Toronto Area and for their unwavering encouragement for YD's establishment as an organization. In the same breath, we express our deepest gratitude to the Gordon Foundation for its financial contributions, which made the research possible.

We would like to acknowledge and show our appreciation for our academic advisor Dickson Eyoh, PhD. (Associate Professor of Political Science and African Studies, University of Toronto), who provided us with academic guidance and constructive criticism.

We also would like to thank the following organizations for allowing us to use their facilities, recruit participants and promote the research. We are truly thankful and this study would not have been possible without their support:

Ethiopian Association in Toronto
St. Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in Toronto
Ethiopian Canadian Muslim Community Association
Ethiopian Evangelical Church in Toronto
Ethiopian Students Association-York University (ESAY)
Harari Community Centre
New Hibret Cooperative
P2P Aid Organization
Toronto Habesha News

We are also thankful to YD members who helped with the logistics of the research: designing and distributing flyers, helping with printing, advertising, as well as participating in the research.

Research Task Force – the team work you exhibited while conducting this study was remarkable. YD would like to acknowledge Alpha Abebe, Ruth Amanuel, Maraki Fikre Merid, Eman Jamie, and Eskender Mekonnen for their hard work. Also special thanks to Helena Shimeles (Executive Director, *Young Diplomats*) and Redeat Maru who offered their time and services without obligation.

To all the youth who participated in our questionnaire and focus group sessions, we hope this study reflects your voices to the fullest. In unity we have an enormous potential and you have re-ignited our passion and vision to create an organization that reflects you!

Executive Summary

The principal objective of this participatory research project was to explore challenges faced by the Ethiopian youth and how they impede upon their full participation in the peacebuilding and development processes both locally and in Ethiopia.

The research utilized two forms of data gathering. The first method involved three focus groups involving 19 participants in total. The second method was the completion of questionnaires, with 157 youth participants; bringing the total pool of participants to 176. The sampling process was not random however, participant were recruited from a range of organizational and social networks.

The major sections of this paper are as follows:

1. *Youth Connectedness to the Ethiopian Community in Toronto*
2. *Youth Connectedness to Ethiopia*
3. *Challenges to Peace Building and Development*
4. *Opportunities for Peace Building and Development.*

The results of this study have shown that youth in the Ethiopian community in Toronto are facing a number of challenges that have affected their ability to succeed individually, as well as collectively as a community. Indicated in the literature and affirmed by the research, the prominent difficulties faced by the community can be compounded into the following categories: poverty; employment, education, discrimination, and culture-related issues.

Based on the needs articulated through this assessment, *Young Diplomats* has formulated the following recommendations for organizations and policy-makers who aim to promote peacebuilding and development through Ethiopian youth in Toronto.

Recommendation 1:

- Clear support, funding and spaces to be provided to youth-led organizations in the Ethiopian community.

Recommendation 2:

- Enhanced utilization of existing media sources, as well as support for the creation of new and innovative forms of communication through media.

Recommendation 3:

- Implementation of a comprehensive mentorship program that will encompass social; academic and professional streams.

Recommendation 4:

- Creation of accessible opportunities for youth to experience Ethiopia; such as work/study abroad programs; international courses; and internships

Methods

Respondents:

157 self-administered questionnaires and 3 focus groups with 19 participants in total were conducted between August-September 2006 among Ethiopian youths living in the GTA. These youth were between the ages of 14 to 29. The total number of respondents was 176.

Sampling Design:

Respondents for the questionnaires were recruited using 8 different avenues to ensure a diverse study population in terms of age groups, gender, ethnic and religious background. Community events, faith-based organizations (mosques, churches), ethnic-based community centres, colleges/universities as well as specific residential areas and word of mouth were among the strategies used to administer the questionnaires. Snowball techniques were employed to recruit further participants through the social networks of some respondents.

Focus group participants were recruited through the above-mentioned channels and word of mouth. An attempt was made to ensure a good balance of the participants in terms

of gender, age, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and educational backgrounds, as well as length of stay in Canada in these focus groups as well.

Procedure:

In order to minimize non-response, questionnaires were filled out under the supervision of a member of the research group. Comfortable locations were set up in order to ensure that respondent did not feel hastened and were able to get clarifications on some of the questions. This also ensured that the respondents completed the questionnaires without the help of any other person.

- Non-response rates were low as all the questionnaires completed were usable and no respondents withdrew or refused to participate in the research study.
- The questionnaire on average lasted about an hour and respondents were compensated $10 for their time and $15 dollars if they participated in the focus groups, which lasted approximately 2 hours.
- A consent form was signed beforehand to ensure the respondents of the confidentiality of their responses and provided the opportunity to clarify the objective of the study. The respondents were also informed of their option to skip questions they were not comfortable answering and that they could withdraw from the questionnaire at any time. This same procedure was followed for the focus group sessions.

Questionnaire Design:

The questionnaire and focus group questions covered four broad areas:

- Youth connectedness to the Ethiopian community in Toronto
- Youth connectedness to Ethiopia
- Challenges to peacebuilding and development

- Opportunities for peacebuilding and development

The content of the questionnaire was designed based on the objectives of the study as well as some of the themes that arose out of the first focus group, which was largely exploratory in nature. The other two focus groups were opportunities to provide more in depth insight on these four areas.

Limitations

The objective of this research study is to provide more of a descriptive and exploratory analysis of the role of Ethiopian youths in terms of peace building and development. The analyses are descriptive in nature and will serve as a starting basis for future in-depth analyses.

Since no prior research trying to identify issues related to this objective was available, the use of questionnaires and focus groups as study designs were found to be very appropriate, as they would help inform and enable more in-depth and focused studies in this area in the future.

Nevertheless, research studies conducted using questionnaire design and focus groups have certain inherent methodological limitations hence results should be interpreted with caution. Results from this research may not be representative of all Ethiopian youths living in Toronto because our sampling design was not random in nature. Most respondents were recruited through community events or faith-based organizations, thus, our pool of respondents will tend to be engaged in the Ethiopian community one way another. The fact that we were able to access these youths to participate in the study already meant that they were not completely disengaged from the community. This was a limitation because it meant we could not hear from the group of youth that needed the most engagement. Nevertheless,

efforts were made to go to locations where we would access individuals with diverse religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

A significant limitation to the research was time constraints and this had clear implications for every facet of the study. The research task force took the enormous challenge of completing a comprehensive study (recruiting, questionnaire building, analysis and report-writing) in less than two months during which 157 youth filled in depth questionnaires and 19 youth participated in three separate focus groups. Even though the initial focus group was used to identify relevant issues and themes to be developed in the questionnaires, there was not enough time to test the validity and reliability of all the questions formulated. Ideally a pre-test of the questionnaire would have been done in a small sample given the time.

Even so, our research task force was advantaged in that it consisted of Ethiopian youth themselves who come from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. The group already had an insight into some of the issues that were relevant to this research study. Those issues were further confirmed and developed through our initial focus group. The non-response rate for the questionnaires was zero. This is reflective of the fact that the issues raised in the questionnaires were relevant to the youth in the community and they were not sensitive in nature. Most of the comments provided by the respondents were encouraging and thanked the group for the opportunity to voice their opinions in the matters at hand.

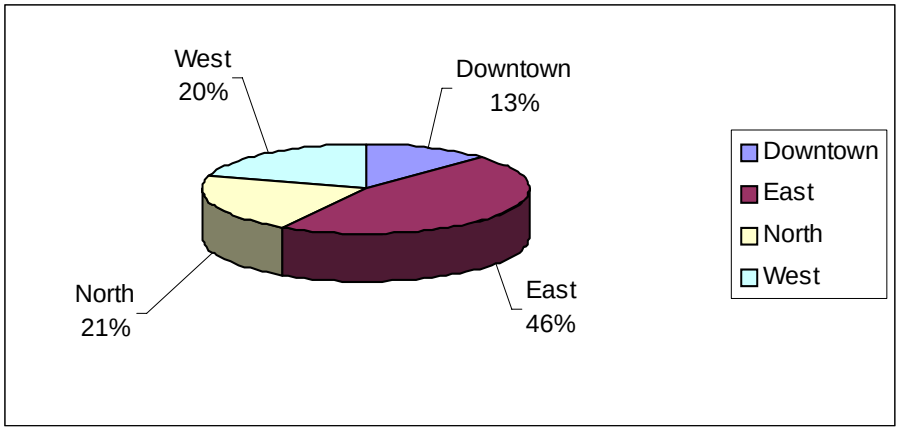
Respondent Profile

The three focus groups were composed of 19 participants in total, with 7 males and 12 females. In order to ensure their comfort and confidentiality, focus group participants were not asked to divulge many personal details or descriptors. Based on our modes of recruitment however, we do know that the number of focus group participants that were

born in Canada versus overseas was split fairly equally, as was the number in high school versus post-secondary institutions or workforce.

The following highlights the demographic and other characteristics of the 157 respondents of the questionnaires.

- About half of our 157 respondents were female (56.1%).
- 51.0% were between the ages of 14 to 19 while 25.5% were between 20 and 24 and the rest 25 and over.
- 45.8% of our respondents were born in Canada. 17% of the remaining respondents not born in Canada were recent immigrants who have not been in Canada longer than 5 years while 37.3% are more seasoned immigrants to Canada.
- About half of our respondents had completed different levels of high school education with most of them (74.7%) having completed grade 9 to 12 of high school. The remaining 47.6% of the respondents had also completed different years in University or college with more than half having completed year 3 or 4 of university or college education. [Note: this is not meant to be reflective of wider educational patterns in the Ethiopian community]
- Of the total sample, 39.6% stated being currently employed. Of these, more than half or 53.6% were employed in full-time jobs (Full-time jobs were defined as jobs that required more than 30 hours per week).
- Most of our respondents live in the east side of the city (46.1%) while only 12.5% live downtown and an equal proportion of about one fifth live in the West and north end of the city.



Literature Review

Background

The waves of Ethiopian migration can be essentially mapped onto the timeline of tumultuous political events in Ethiopia beginning in the 1970s. "The first large out-migration of Ethiopians started when a military government, the *Derg*, deposed Emperor Haile-Selassie and the country adopted communism".[2] This regime, led by Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam, ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1991,[3] a period that coincides with the first wave of Ethiopians coming into Canada. According to the 1996 Canadian Census, there are only 65 Ethiopians in Canada that arrived before 1976.[4] However, about 44.4 percent of the Ethiopians living in Canada by 1996 arrived between 1976 and 1985, many of which will have Canadian-born children by now.[5]

> According to data from Canadian Immigration and Citizenship reports, 21,591 Ethiopian immigrants (excluding refugee claimants) arrived in Canada between 1974 and 1996, and the majority of these immigrants settled in Ontario. Among those who settled in Ontario, most reside in the greater Toronto area, where, according to the estimates by the Ethiopian Association in Toronto, the current Ethiopian population numbers 30,000.[6]

The years following the Derg government consisted of "political turmoil, civil war in Eritrea, and border conflicts with Somalia".[7] The majority of first generation Ethiopian immigrants in Toronto seem to have emigrated for the specific purpose of escaping political turmoil, which indicates a particularity to this demographic of immigrants. The reasons for leaving ones native country, the amount of preparation and pending resources, and the expectations that one has of the host country are all significant factors in shaping ones immigrant experience. There is sufficient literature that supports what our questionnaires and focus groups discovered about the Ethiopian immigrant experience. As this research will demonstrate, this unsettled migration experience significantly impacted all facets of the community that has formed in Toronto.

The focus groups and questionnaires developed for this research sought to draw connections between the migration experiences of first generation Ethiopian immigrants and the challenges faced by the second-generation youth. The following section is an overview of the literature surrounding the general challenges to peacebuilding and development in the Ethiopian community in Toronto. The remainder of this paper will demonstrate how this literature intersects with the views espoused by the youth in the community. It will also expand on various opportunities for peacebuilding and development as articulated by Ethiopian youth.

Challenges to Peacebuilding and Development

Upon settling in Canada, Ethiopians have found themselves facing a number of challenges that have affected their ability to succeed individually, as well as collectively as a community. There are five challenges that have shown to be the most taxing on the community as shown by the literature and supported by this research: poverty; employment; education; discrimination; and culture-related issues. These five challenges are interconnected but each has specific implications for how the community has formed and mobilized as a group.

Poverty:

In a recently published analysis of the 1996 Canadian Census, Ethiopians were named, among three other groups, as "the most severely disadvantaged in our community".[8] The data showed that Ethiopians suffered extremely high levels of poverty with 70% of the children living in families whose income is below the "low income cut-off". The causes of this poverty were seen to reflect high levels of documented unemployment and "a concentration of employment in lower skill jobs" even though they did not lack basic

education.[9] The proportion of university graduates were low[10], however, this figure does not seem to account for higher education attained outside of Canada.

It should be noted that the Ethiopian population documented to have lived in Toronto during this census was only 7,005, a number considerably lower than the 30,000 that the Ethiopian Association in Toronto estimates to have in Toronto today and the 21,591 from the CIC reports. Among those community members who simply did not fill out the census, the census also likely missed the large portion of Ethiopian immigrants who were refugee claimants or not yet permanent residents. Nevertheless, its findings are not erroneous, for it was still likely able to pick up on broad social trends in the community. Its findings are also supported by other literature that shows similar financial constraints in the community.

Employment:

Ethiopians have an overall unemployment rate of 24.4%, more than twice the average in Toronto.[11] Further, "more than 80 percent of the Ethiopian women and 70 percent of Ethiopian men are in lower skill manual or non-manual occupations".[12] The Ethiopian Association in Toronto conducted research regarding settlement service needs of Ethiopian newcomers in Toronto. In their questionnaire, the respondents expressed great difficulty in finding jobs within their first three years of arriving in Toronto. When asked to list their top ten difficulties and concerns in order of importance during the first few months of their arrival: finding a job; looking for a house to rent; and obtaining job search training ranked as the top three, respectively.[13] This difficulty finding employment demonstrates the lack of resources available to Ethiopian migrants upon arrival and also reflects the conditions that compelled them to leave Ethiopia in such a hasty and unorganized manner.

Education:

The general trend in immigrant education patterns is that young people in Toronto are getting more education than their parents. However, about one-fifth of Ethiopian youth are out of school and do not have a high school diploma.[14] Those analyzing the census data expressed particular concern for "the small number of groups with unusually large numbers of young people who are not in school and not high school graduates…(including) Ethiopians".[15] The financial burdens faced by the community is also a stressor in this respect and is likely to be yet another barrier to the attainment of postsecondary education.

Discrimination:

Some challenges faced by the community are not easily solvable by upward economic mobility, but are reflective of broader social ailments. A study found that about 65 percent of their sample of Ethiopian immigrants experienced one or more forms of discrimination in Canada because of their racial or ethnic background.[16] Studies have been conducted on the extent to which Ethiopians identify as being 'black' and how they assess their racial minority status.[17] Part of the adjustment process that Ethiopians face upon migration has been found to include adjustment to a racial minority status; something very different from their experience in Ethiopia.[18] The youth in this research shared the same sentiments about growing up as 'black' youth in Toronto and it was cited among the most difficult challenges faced by the youth.

Culture Related Issues:

There are many positive aspects of Ethiopian culture that the youth in this research expressed pride for. There are, however, some culture-related issues that have shown to be detrimental to the integration of the community into Canadian society. Though language skills may be attributive to educational patterns in the community, language patterns can also reflect the extent to which a community is connected to Canadian society and have access to social and governmental services. According the Canadian Census, almost 95

percent of Torontonians who say that they are African or Black speak only English at home.[19] In contrast to this, less than 25 percent of Ethiopians speak only English at home.[20] Although the census data shows that many people who *can* speak English do not do so at home, "the language used in the home reflects the individuals' cultures and trajectories of immigration of ethno-racial groups".[21]

Language barriers and other cultural differences often account for the extent to which immigrants are willing to exploit social resources in their host country. However, despite the immediacy of their need, "immigrants use fewer services compared to Canadian born and immigrants that have come earlier… part of the service utilization problem may stem from a mismatch between what service providers feel they are offering and what potential clients perceive [to be] their needs and resources to meet those needs".[22]

This insight can also be extended to the disjunction that occurs with governmental and community organizations and the youth population. There are often many organizations that offer services directed to youth, however, there is often a mismatch between what these organizations aim to provide to the youth and what the youth actually need. To take the example further, the cultural differences that exist between older generations and youth can create an additional barrier, with youth less willing to take advantage of these resources and services. This is a theme that was echoed in our questionnaires and focus groups and has led us to advocate for more youth-led organizations in our recommendation section.

Results

1. Youth Connectedness to the Ethiopian Community in Toronto

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES:

"If you were to tell me that Ethiopian youth were doing something, I would not necessarily go to it even as someone who is pro-unity, pro-community—because let's just say there is a negative image associated with Ethiopians."

"I want recognition as an Ethiopian, African youth—recognition as an individual. I want the people around me to know what I have done; that I am not part of the percentage."

In our analysis of youth connectedness to the Ethiopian community, there is one significant qualification that needs to be made. As discussed in our limitations section, most of the youth that participated in this study were connected to the community to some degree by virtue of our ability to access them. To this extent, we were not able to articulate reasons why some Ethiopian youth are completely disconnected from the community. However, there was still some variation that existed within our sample and interesting points of analysis that demonstrate the levels and degree of youth engagement in the community. By looking at the youth's social and familial contacts; membership to ethnic communities; and levels of participation in community groups and events, this section demonstrates the different ways in which youth are connected to the Ethiopian community—from its most basic form to its chief manifestation.

Social and Familial Contacts

A direct indication of connectedness to the community is whether or not the respondents had their parents living in Toronto. The information gathered on the youth in this questionnaire is not meant to reflect patterns of social and familial contacts in the Ethiopian community. Rather, it is meant to provide a context with which one can understand the responses given by the youth in this study.

82.1% of the youth in our questionnaires had their parents living in Toronto, and almost all of them lived with their parents. Though most of the youth who were born in Canada lived with their parents, only 53.8% of those youth who were classified as recent immigrants (arriving in Canada within 5 years) had their parents living in Toronto. From our focus groups we know that most youth who did not live with their parents were living with extended family. 96% of the youth reported to have some extended family members in Toronto however; the low numbers of youth who had over ten family members living in Toronto (19.7%) is reflective of how recent the Ethiopian community to Canada.

Considering that our research was youth-focused, it was important for us to uncover the social networks in the community that youth had access to and how these networks affected (or did not affect) the engagement of youth in the community. Peer social networks, rather than familial networks, proved to be the most deterministic factor in the engagement of youth in community activities. That is, youth who had more Ethiopian friends were more active in the Ethiopian community and attended more community events.

92.3% of our questionnaire respondents reported to have some Ethiopian friends. Only 11.5% of these respondents said they had less than 5 Ethiopian friends. All other respondents said they had more Ethiopian friends; with some giving numbers as high as 50. The questionnaires tried to assess the level of influence of these peers by asking the youth: "how many of your *close* friends are Ethiopian?" When given the options few; half; most; and all, 1/3 of these youth said that *most* of their close friends were Ethiopian and 1/3 said that *few* were. Of those youth who said that they did not have any Ethiopian friends, most said that this was because there were no Ethiopian youth where they lived or in schools they attend.

There is a dearth of literature or data available to quantify the concentration of Ethiopians living in specific neighbourhoods in Toronto. Our questionnaires, however,

supported our common knowledge that there are certain identifiable neighbourhoods in Toronto that house a concentrated number of Ethiopians. 42.5% of the youth respondents said that they had Ethiopian neighbours and of this number, 23% said that *half, most* or *all* of their neighbours were Ethiopian. This is a high number considering the relatively small number of Ethiopians in proportion to the total population of Toronto. From our questionnaires, those youth who lived downtown had the highest number of Ethiopian neighbours.

Ethnic Communities in Toronto

To the extent that ethnic communities are still part of the composition of the Ethiopian community in Toronto, this research was also interested in looking at how connected youth were to their specific ethnic communities. Though umbrella organizations exist for the Ethiopian community in Toronto, we know that there are also many smaller organizations that serve to promote the specific cultural, linguistic, spiritual and economic needs of members of their ethnic community.

When asked to rank how connected they were to their ethnic community on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest), about half of the total sample scored their level of connectedness between 1-5, but of this group over half scored 1. The other half of the sample scored their connectedness between 6-10. The questionnaires asked youth how many of their Ethiopian friends were of the same ethnic group as them. 24.1% of those who had Ethiopian friends said that they did not even know which ethnic groups their friends belong to. More than ½ of this groups also said that they did *not* have a strong connection to their ethnic community.

45.4% of those youth who had Ethiopian friends said that *all, most* or *half* of their friends were of the same ethnic group. Though 88.5% of this group said that their parents had strong connections with their ethnic community, ½ of them said that they had a strong

connection themselves. Finally, of those youth who said that they had Ethiopian friends but that *none* were from the same ethnic group, 100% said that they did *not* have any connection to their ethnic community. This data demonstrates that some youth are connected to the Ethiopian community by virtue of their connectedness to their ethnic communities. Peer groups seemed to be the best predictor of high levels of connectedness to ethnic communities however, many of these contacts may have been created through the social networks of the parents.

Participation in Ethiopian Community Groups and Events

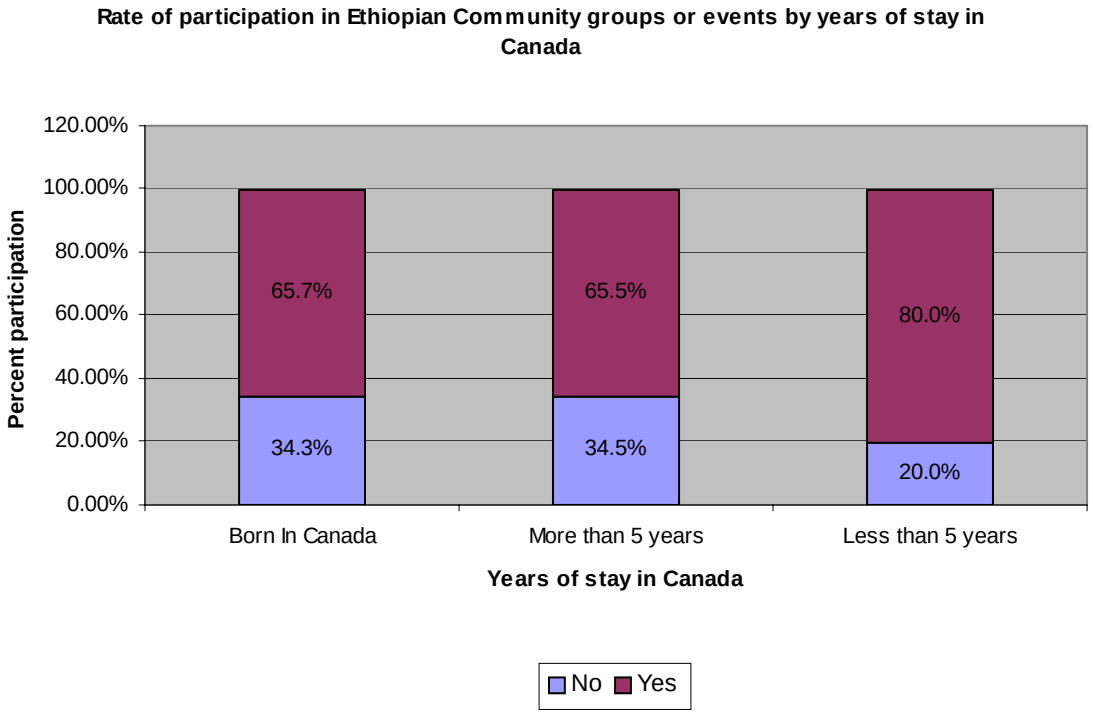
Though personal and social networks are the most direct form of connection to the Ethiopian community, the most relevant, for our purposes, is the level of participation in Ethiopian community groups and events. By assessing the level of engagement of youth in their community, we are able determine clear challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding and development. *Young Diplomats* works with the understanding that any meaningful engagement of the Diaspora with peacebuilding and development initiatives in Ethiopia can only come about at a community level. A strong and cohesive community is one that successfully engages their youth and includes them in all levels of decision-making and implementation.

68.2% of the youth in our questionnaires participated in some kind of community group or event. A number of questions in the questionnaires were aimed at understanding which youth participated (who); what groups and activities they participated in (what); the level of engagement youth displayed through this participation (how); the reasons for their participation (why); and the reasons for not participating (why not).

Who Participates?

- Of those youth who reported to participate in any Ethiopian community groups or events:

- Recent immigrants (arrived to Canada within 5 years) tended to participate more than youth born in Canada (80% vs. 65.7%)
- Those who declared having 1 or more Ethiopian friends had a higher rate of participation than those without any (69.7% vs. 45.5%)
- There was no correlation between those youth who had their parents living in Toronto and their level of participation. That is, those youth who had their parents living in Toronto did not necessarily participate more in community groups or events, or visa versa.



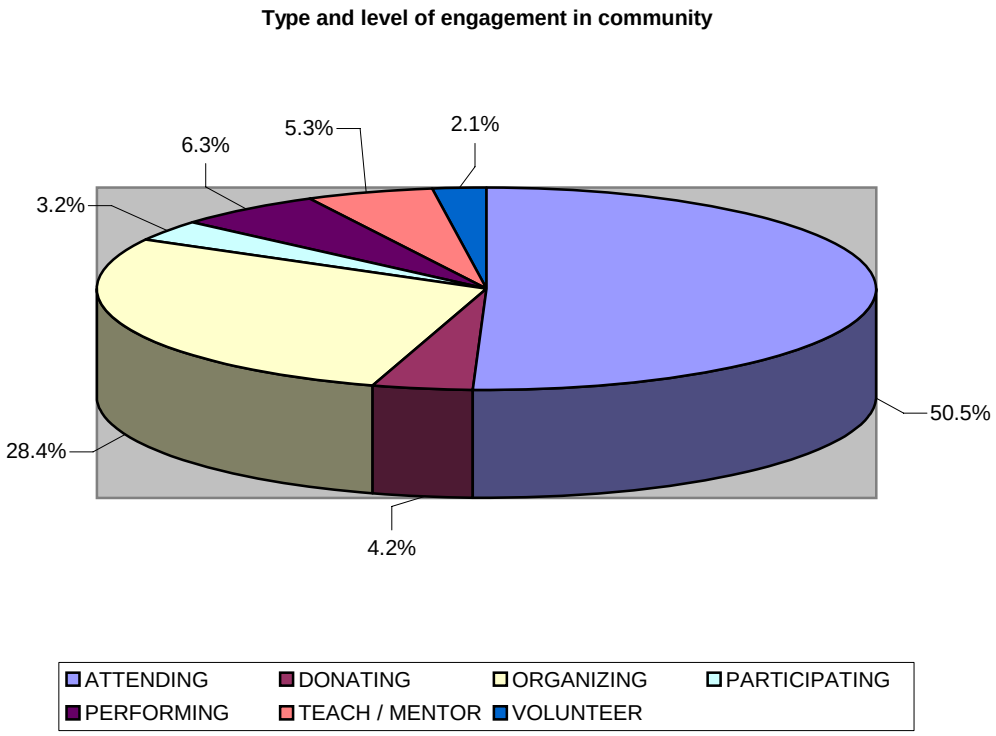
What Do Youth Participate In?

- Both the questionnaires and focus group results showed that the youth were participating through faith-based groups/events, cultural activities, and recreational activities

- When we combined those who participated in church groups, mosques, faith-based associations and cultural groups that engaged in religious activities –we found that 1/3 of all youth participation in Ethiopian community groups or events was through faith based organizations.
- ¼ of youth participation was through events run by youth-led organizations.

How Are Youth Participating?

- The level of engagement of youth through their participation was assessed by asking youth *how* they participated. 28.4% of the youth who reported to participate in any Ethiopian community groups or events did so through *organizing* them. This is seen to be the highest level of engagement.
- The other forms of engagement that youth reported included attending, donating, participating, volunteering, teaching/mentoring, performing.
- However, 50.5% of this group participated solely through attendance. This is seen to be the lowest level of engagement.



Why Are Youth Participating?

- After youth were asked detailed questions about their participation in community groups and events, the questionnaires and focus groups asked them what they gained out of their involvement to assess the level of self-fulfillment gained through these activities. Some of the most typical responses to this question included:
    - Meeting people
    - Cultural awareness
    - Gaining a sense of pride in their culture
    - Making friends
    - Learning languages

- The questionnaires and focus groups were also interested in whether or not youth felt their engagement in the community had any external effects. When asked whether or not the Ethiopian community gained anything out of their involvement:
    - 57.6% said that the community *did* benefit from their involvement however, 39.4% said that they *did not know* whether or not the community benefited.

Why Aren't Youth Participating?

- Those youth who reported that that they did *not* participate in any Ethiopian community groups or events were asked to give reasons for this.
- Of the 31.8% that did not participate in any groups or events
    - More than 1/3 said that it was because of a lack of time
    - ¼ said that it was because they did not know about the events or groups
    - About 1/5 said that it was because they did not have any interest
- The focus groups allowed us to get more detailed answers to this question and also allowed those who *did* participate in the community to voice their frustrations and concerns.
    - Some youth said that their parents discouraged them from participating in the Ethiopian community. Negative attitudes expressed by older generations makes youth feel that their attempts and initiatives in the community will not make a difference. These sentiments were expressed by the parents because the frustration of failed attempts at engaging in the community and through their bad experiences.
    - Many youth felt that the community did not have sufficient activities for the youth to participate in. Where they existed, they were seen to lack the ability

to attract youth and in some cases were not youth friendly. Some said that politically focused groups were the easiest way to deter youth participation.

    - This is supported by the questionnaire results that asked youth to score their interest in Ethiopian politics on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest). 39% scored their interest between 1-2 and 6% scored 9-10.

- Youth voiced concerns that the staff of most community organizations were members of the older generation and had nothing in common with them.

Implications for Peacebuilding and Development

Through this analysis of youth connectedness to the Ethiopian community in Toronto, we understand that peers have an overwhelming influence over how youth act and what they choose to act in. Those youth who declared having 1 or more Ethiopian friends had a higher participation rate than those without any (69.7% vs. 45.5%). Therefore, organizations and individuals who aim to engage youth in peacebuilding and development initiatives should capitalize on peer networks as an opportunity to promote events and engage youth in different community groups.

The questionnaires also showed that other than faith-based groups and events, most youth who participated did so through youth-led organizations. This was further supported by the focus group discussions where youth said that they were discouraged by organizations/events that were not youth friendly or run by youth. Youth are engaged by people who can relate to their experiences as young people and the challenges they face as a result.

There was no clear indication, through the questionnaire analysis, that those youth who lived in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of Ethiopians participated in more events or groups. However, through this and further research into neighbourhood

compositions in Toronto, certain areas can be targeted to promote community programming initiatives. Groups can take advantage of cultural resources (such as Ethiopian stores), word of mouth, and opportunities for information dissemination (i.e. flyers, posters) in these neighbourhoods when looking to engage the Ethiopian community building initiatives.

The fact that almost half (45.4%) of our sample reported that *half*, *most* or *all* of their friends were of the same ethnic group as themselves, and that this corresponded with their level of connectedness to that ethnic community may have various implications for peacebuilding and development in the Ethiopian community. This might simply be reflective of the comfort people, including youth, feel in interacting with others that share the same language, culture, traditions, history and/or religion as they do. The salient question is how do these segmented communities work together to build peace in the Ethiopian community as a whole.

Though some questions were aimed at getting youth perspectives on this, at this point, little is available in the literature to fully understand how these divisions have or have not contributed to a strong Ethiopian Diaspora community. Further research is needed to unearth this so as to inform our approach to building peace in the community. Which channel is more effective in engaging youth in the Ethiopian community: ethnic community groups or umbrella organizations? Is it possible to have both a strong ethnic identity as well as an Ethiopian identity? Are ethnic identities and ethnic community groups necessarily detrimental to the resolution of conflict in the community? These are all questions that remain at the end of this research and ones that deserve further academic attention.

2. Youth Connectedness to Ethiopia

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES:

Do we have an obligation to help back home?
"Yes! That's your identity. I am responsible for as many Ethiopians as I can help. We are fortunate—if we are already on a career path we have to share our knowledge, knowledge-transfer."

The extension of Ethiopian ethnic communities and identities is one way in which youth have displayed a connection to the land, cultures and traditions of Ethiopia. This research was interested in discovering other modes of connection to Ethiopia and how these could be used in peacebuilding and development initiatives aimed abroad. The questionnaires and focus groups asked questions that examined the levels of assimilation into Canadian society; socialization into Ethiopian culture; and knowledge and interest in Ethiopian politics and social issues.

Assimilation into Canadian Society

One form of assimilation is the extent to which one personally identifies with the host culture. Youth were asked to describe ways in which they felt Canadian culture was different from Ethiopian culture. Many respondents took this opportunity to show pride for what they saw as the rich history and traditions of Ethiopian culture. It was also clear that many youth saw 'culture' as meaning something ethnic and foreign, as many responded with comments like 'Canada has no culture'. The question that followed however, asked the youth which culture they identified with more, Canadian or Ethiopian. 27% of the sample identified only as Canadian. These respondents were composed of both youth born in Canada and born abroad (with Canadian-born numbers slightly higher).

The questionnaires also asked questions about Canadian civic engagement both to assess the level of assimilation into Canadian society, as well as to compare youth's interest in civic and political issues of both Canada and Ethiopia. When asked to rate their interest in

Canadian politics on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest), 35% of the youth scored 1-2 where as 6% scored 9-10. The youth were also asked if they had ever voted in a Canadian election – at any level (if they were of the voting age), and 27.9% said that they did. This is an unusually high number considering national levels of youth voting patterns. Once again, this is not meant to be reflective of general trends of voting among Ethiopian youth in Toronto, and may simply be a product of the composition of respondents. Considering their low level of interest in Canadian politics, it was surprising that 73.9% of the respondents were able to name at least one Canadian political party.

Socialization into Ethiopian Culture

To the extent that many of our respondents were either Canadian-born or seasoned immigrants, adoption of Ethiopian culture was likely to be a result of parental socialization. The term 'Ethiopian culture', in this context, was used to understand how much youth adopted Ethiopian languages; followed Ethiopian media; were interested in Ethiopian politics; desired to work or study in Ethiopia; and demonstrated knowledge about Ethiopian issues and events.

When asked which culture they identified with more (Canadian or Ethiopian), the majority (65.8%) of the respondents said that they identified as Ethiopian. Though they were asked to choose only *one* option, a small number of youth (6.3%) chose both options; expressing that they identified with Ethiopian and Canadian culture equally. It is a fair inference to make that had that option been available to all respondents, more youth would have chosen both options. However, the constraint of having to choose *one* meant that youth were forced to make a self-assessment and choose which culture they identified with more, even if it was by a small margin.

88.2% of the respondents said that they spoke 1 or more Ethiopian languages but the percentage for those who were born in Canada was lower. It was an oversight on our part not

to include an option separate from *speak,* that said *understand.* Some youth actually wrote in the word "understand" to express the fact that though they could not speak any Ethiopian languages, they could comprehend and understand them. Based on this, we feel that the number of respondents who said that they could speak 1 or more Ethiopian languages may have been lower had the *understand* option been available to them.

Knowledge of and Interest in Ethiopian Issues

Though language could be a barrier to accessing some forms of Ethiopian media, there are many other ways in which youth are able to follow-up on Ethiopian issues that are available to them in English. When asked whether or not they followed-up on Ethiopian news, 53.6% of the youth said *yes* in their questionnaire responses. The percentage of youth who followed up on Ethiopian news in the Canadian-born sample was less than this and the percentage from those in the Ethiopian-born sample was higher than this. When asked to describe what their main sources of information were for Ethiopian news, more than half of the youth cited their parents as the primary source, followed by the Internet. As mentioned earlier, when asked to rate their level of interest in Ethiopian politics, 39.1% of the youth scored 1-2 and 6% scored 9-10 when asked to rate their level of interest on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest).

Youth were asked whether or not they had ever travelled to Ethiopia (besides being born there). 59.7% of the respondents said that they had travelled to Ethiopia at least once, most of them within the last 10 years. Youth were also asked: *if you had the opportunity to study in Ethiopia—now or in the future—would you take it?* More youth who had travelled to Ethiopia responded *yes* to this question, demonstrating a higher desire to contribute to or experience Ethiopia in more depth.

Though most of the youth who were raised or born in Canada felt that the Ethiopian Diaspora had a responsibility to change conditions in Ethiopia, many demonstrated a low

level of connection to the issues by the dearth of their suggestions as to how they could help. When asked to list ways in which they could help, many of these youth gave general descriptions such as “assist in any way we can”, or “donate money to Ethiopia”. However, our focus groups and questionnaires demonstrated that the recent immigrants (those who came within 5 yrs) as well as those who had recently travelled to Ethiopia were able to give concrete examples as to how to engage the community. This group was better able to connect with the issues occurring in Ethiopia and were more engaged in discussions relating to these issues. This group gave concrete courses of action such as investment in education, the creation of more jobs and funding of social programs.

Implications for Peacebuilding and Development

The youth apathy to politics demonstrated through this research can pose a challenge to peacebuilding and development initiatives. That youth have shown to be very disinterested in Canadian politics suggests that they are less likely to mobilize as a group and use political channels, such as parliamentary representatives, to lobby for the issues they care about, including problems in Ethiopia.

Most youth who had any knowledge of Ethiopian politics attained it directly from their parents. Our data showed that more than half of the youth had the same political views as their parents, and the youth reported that many of these parents were highly interested or engaged in Ethiopian politics. If these parents adopt a highly divisive and politicized attitude towards Ethiopian issues, this can pose a challenge by either deterring youth from involvement in peacebuilding initiatives or creating irreconcilable political identities in these youth.

The Internet was cited as the second most utilized source of information for attaining Ethiopian news. This presents an opportunity for groups to use this communicative channel

to engage youth in what are essentially distant issues. This also exposes youth to alternate and nuanced views on Ethiopian issues and allows them to form their own informed opinions.

The fact that these youth lived in Canada but still identified strongly with their Ethiopian identity is an opportunity to further engage them in community initiatives both here and abroad. Further, regardless of where they were born, or whether or not they have traveled to Ethiopia, Ethiopian youth demonstrated an overwhelming sense of responsibility to help the conditions in Ethiopia. This high level of interest is a well-defined opportunity for groups and organizations to use this demographic within the community in initiatives aimed abroad.

The youth felt that Ethiopian politics was a disruptive influence on relations among Ethiopians in the Diaspora. Youth apathy in Ethiopian politics then, can also be seen as an opportunity to engage youth in other issues and forms of social organization that are less conflict-ridden.

Our sample showed that those who had lived in or traveled to Ethiopia had a higher desire to work or study in Ethiopia if given the opportunity. This same group had concrete and insightful ideas as to how they could make a difference in Ethiopian social, political and economic spheres. First-hand experiences provide an awareness of the issues in Ethiopia and intensify the desire to personally engage with these issues, despite the physical disconnect. Providing youth with more opportunities and support for travel to Ethiopia is the most effective and exciting opportunity to inform and engage the Diaspora in peacebuilding initiatives in Ethiopia.

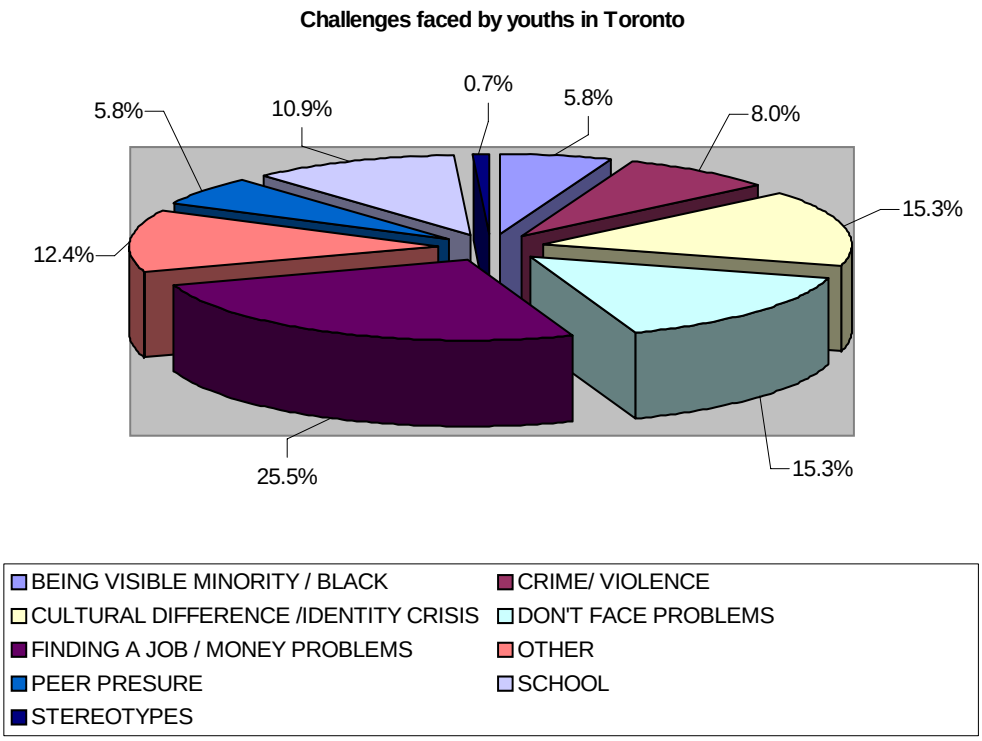
3. Challenges to Peacebuilding and Development

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES:

"People in our community are often competitive. In my parents' experience, they found that they tried to help other people and they shunned them. That's been their personal experiences. The sense that I am not going to share my knowledge with you; where you see Indians and Chinese sticking together. Even though it seems like they are sticking to themselves—that is what their strength is, their cohesion; sticking together and helping each other out."

Part of the analysis of youth connectedness to the Ethiopian community in Toronto and to Ethiopia unearthed some of the challenges to peacebuilding and development. However, many of these challenges were framed within these contexts. To the extent that individual Ethiopians are what make up the Ethiopian community, the personal challenges faced by the youth should still be understood as challenges to the community. Effectively addressing these individual challenges at a community level is the highest form of peacebuilding and development as it creates a mechanism of sustainability and capacity building for the community at large.

Before youth were asked to articulate what they saw as community challenges, they were asked to describe some of the biggest problems and challenges they faced in their lives living in Toronto. It is important to note that they were not asked to describe their challenges as *Ethiopian*, or even as *youth*, but simply the challenges they faced day-to-day. 15.3% of the respondents said that they did not face any problems or challenges at all. 26.2% of the Canadian-born sample said that they did not have any problems, compared to only 6.6% of those born outside of Canada who had the same response. The following were the main responses that were given by those who said they faced any challenges living in Toronto. Another important note here is that this question was posed as an open-ended question; the youth were not given pre-selected options.



Why do you think you face these challenges?

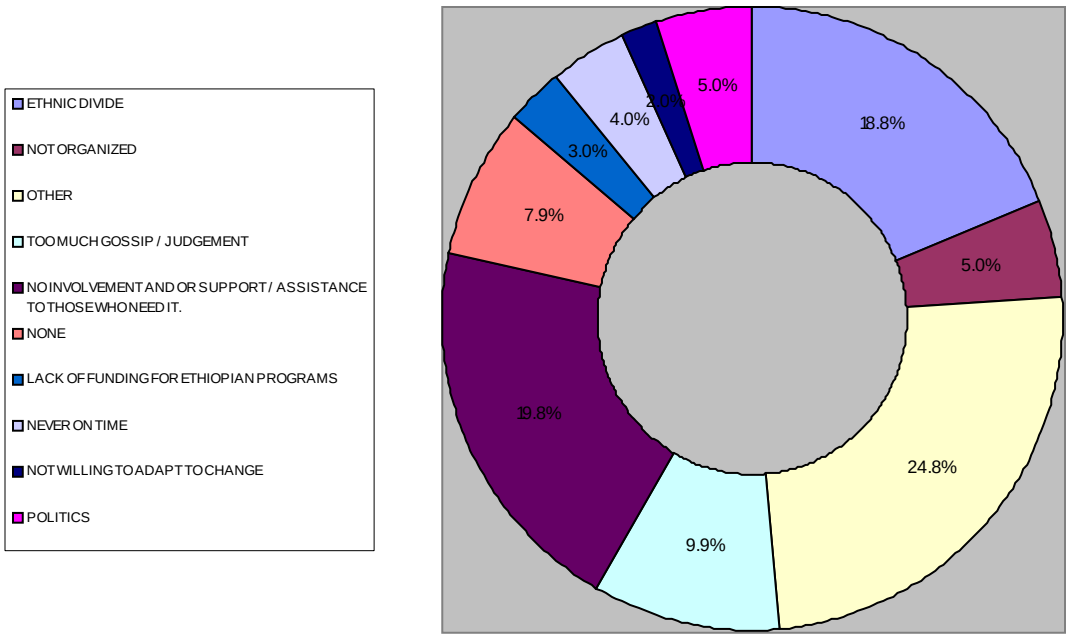
Our focus groups allowed for us to explore how these youth viewed their challenges and why they felt they faced them. Coming to Canada as youth was seen to have its own cultural shock, especially for those youth who came separated from their parents. Close knit family ties are broken and these youth have to fend for themselves in a foreign land. They face a lot of stress trying to financially support themselves, while trying to meet the expectation of being a model of success for the remaining relatives back home. Some who experience these harsh realities are embarrassed to tell the type of work they do to their family back home in Ethiopia.

The youth who cited cultural differences as a challenge described things such as culture shock; racial-identity crisis; and not fitting into Canadian society as contributing to this difference. Youth who migrated to Canada had a hard time internalizing ready-made labels such as 'African', 'black' or 'minority, which they were confronted with for the first

time. Some felt that they were lumped into a group that did not recognize their history or uniqueness as Ethiopians. Other youth felt constraints when trying to 'fit in' to what they saw as *black culture* by purchasing black cultural commodities or satisfying performative expectations. Even if youth did not identify with their minority status, there was a feeling that simply being black posed a challenge to the integration of the community into Canadian society. Other new immigrant communities may face less challenges because they are not visibly a minority and may experience more ease in fitting in.

Collective Challenges

Though the youth were able to articulate the challenges they faced individually, they faced more difficulty in placing these challenges into a community context. 45% of the youth said that they did not feel or did not know if other Ethiopian youth living in Toronto faced the same challenges as they did. However, when the youth were asked to name the major problems faced by Ethiopians in Toronto, they stated the same challenges as they faced individually. Even when they cited similar challenges, youth were unable or unwilling to accredit the challenges they faced individually, to their status as Ethiopian immigrants in Toronto. This is further supported by the fact that, when asked, most youth respondents did not feel they needed the help of the Ethiopian community in solving their problems. It is also interesting to note the same response was given when asked if the youth felt they needed the help of the Canadian government.



4. Opportunities for Peacebuilding and Development

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES:

"I am going to be positive and say that the Ethiopian community has potential but it is going to take a lot of time, effort, and dedication from individuals and groups. Your background does not matter—if you were from back home or from here. We all have to come together to unite to work on the issues that we have, or recognize that we have these issues."

"You have to realize that Ethiopians came recently—twenty to twenty five years ago. They have been working hard. The first community that came as our founding board—the cushion for our generation to build that community."

Youth respondents were able to clearly articulate opportunities for peacebuilding and development because they saw a stark need for such initiatives in the community. Youth felt that the Ethiopian community lacked elements that made other immigrant communities

successful such as group cohesion; strength in numbers; strong businesses; and high levels of education. The top three immigrant communities that were identified as 'successful immigrant groups' by the youth were the Chinese, Indian, and Jewish communities, respectively.

Though the youth were conscious that the Ethiopian community could not be evaluated based on the successes of these larger and more established immigrant communities, they still felt a need to build capacity in these areas where they lagged behind. When asked to list opportunities to better the Ethiopian community, more than half of the youth responded—promoting unity, better education, and the creation of more jobs, which were the same elements they valued in successful immigrant communities.

Youth also saw opportunities to build peace in the community by implementing programs that prevent youth from engaging in deviant and violent activities. For instance, a soccer player emphasized that besides school and work, practices took up most of his time; hence he did not have time for such "destructive activities". Some of the youth cited crime and violence as a challenge that directly affected them and many youth felt that there was a need for more youth-focused programs to address this challenge. Those youth who admitted to engaging in deviant/criminal activity, or knew other youth who did, said that they did because of a lack of direction. They felt that they needed other people, preferably peers, who could provide positive representations of themselves and act as role models to them. It was encouraging to see that even youth who were not contributing to peace in the community could provide articulate insight as to why this was the case.

Conclusion

This paper assessed youth perspectives to challenges to peacebuilding and development in the Ethiopian community. This was done by analyzing the level of connectedness youth demonstrated to the Ethiopian community in Toronto. The research found that peer networks were the most influential connection to the community and could be used to further engage youth in community groups and events. It also found that some youth were identifying strongly with their specific ethnic communities in Toronto but it was unclear, from this research, what the implications of this was to peacebuilding and development in the community. Youth engaged highly through faith-based groups in the Ethiopian community but also participated through youth-led organizations and events.

The level of connection youth had to Ethiopia was important to assess in order to gauge how they could be used in peacebuilding and development initiatives aimed abroad. Both Canadian-born and immigrant youth were fairly integrated and/or assimilated into Canadian society however, most still identified more with their Ethiopian identity. Interest in Ethiopian issues was fairly high, except with regards to Ethiopian politics. The knowledge of relevant issues in Ethiopia demonstrated by the youth however, varied depending on whether or not they were born in or had been to Ethiopia.

Youth were able to identify the challenges that needed to be addressed in Ethiopia but were also asked to speak of their own personal challenges. Many of the challenges expressed by the youth mirrored the literature and data available on the Ethiopian community in Toronto (please see literature review) but the youth saw these more as individual rather than community challenges. When asked to articulate the challenges faced by other Ethiopians living in Toronto, most examples were similar to those given in response to their individual challenges.

Finally, youth were able to construct and articulate opportunities for peacebuilding and development in the Ethiopian community in light of the challenges the community already faced. They were able to describe what made an immigrant community 'successful', even giving specific examples, but unanimously felt that the Ethiopian community in Toronto was not one of those examples. Youth felt that there were opportunities for peacebuilding and development in the community through programs that promoted unity, education and aided in employment. Youth also felt that they needed programs that provided positive role models for youth in order to keep them away from deviant and criminal activity.

Recommendations

Young Diplomats took on this research initiative in part because we felt that the challenges faced by Ethiopian youth in Toronto were not being adequately addressed. Though there are various examples of successful youth initiatives in the Ethiopian community, these groups are under-supported, under-funded and under-staffed. It is encouraging to note that 17.5% of the youth respondents who said that they participated in Ethiopian community events, did so through organizing –a demonstration of the leadership potential within our community.

The recommendations that follow this report are aimed at providing channels for these youth to display and strengthen these leadership skills in order to secure a sustainable method of building peace in the community. All initiatives aimed at empowering youth are beneficial in and of themselves, but they are also inherently sustainable, as they build the capacity of the next adult generation to address future challenges in their community. This list of recommendations presented by *Young Diplomats* is not meant to be exhaustive or representative of all needed services for youth in the Ethiopian community. Rather, they are

initiatives that are pragmatic, measurable, and are of immediate need in the community as articulated by the youth in our report.

Recommendation 1:

The youth in this report have expressed frustration with the lack of youth-friendly organizations and events available to them in Toronto. Therefore, we recommend clear support, funding and spaces to be provided to youth-led organizations in the Ethiopian community in order to facilitate these activities. This will address several of the issues articulated in this report including support for social networks; promoting unity; and promoting awareness of other social issues and initiatives.

Recommendation 2:

The youth identified the Internet as one of their primary sources of information about issues related to Ethiopia. They also were aware of existing community-based media channels but felt they needed to be more youth-oriented. In light of this, we recommend the enhanced utilization of existing media sources, as well as support for the creation of new and innovative forms of communication through media.

Recommendation 3:

Through questionnaires and focus groups, youth have repeatedly stated that they lacked positive role models in all aspects of their life. As a result, the youth resorted to non-constructive activities; ill-informed about educational opportunities; had difficulty identifying resources in the community; and suffered economic constraints. Therefore we recommend the implementation of a comprehensive mentorship program that would encompass social; academic and professional streams.

Recommendation 4:

Youth in our study unanimously felt a sense of responsibility to contribute to the betterment of Ethiopia; but were largely unaware of ways in which to do this. Our analysis showed that those youth who had personal experiences in Ethiopia were more informed, articulate and passionate about issues in Ethiopia.

Creating a stronger cultural link between the Diaspora and Ethiopia can encourage youth to be informed and participate in peacebuilding and development efforts in Ethiopia. Therefore, we recommend the creation of accessible opportunities (i.e. work/study abroad programs; international courses; internships) where youth have the chance to both contribute their skills to Ethiopia, as well as learn new skills and insights.

[1] Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA.
[2] Noh, Samuel; et al. (2004)
[3] *What Happened in History: Timeline Ethiopia*. [Online]
[4] Ornstein (2000), pg. 22
[5] Ibid, pg. 26
[6] Noh, Samuel; et al. (2004)
[7] *What Happened in History: Timeline Ethiopia*. [Online]
[8] Ornstein (2000), pg. 21
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ornstein (2000), pg. 53
[12] Ibid, pg. 79
[13] Beyene, Wosen Y. (2000), pg. IV
[14] Ornstein (2000), pg. 53
[15] Ibid, pg. 60
[16] Noh, Samuel; et al. (2004)
[17] Cheboud (2001), Kibour (2001)
[18] Kibour (2001), pg 48
[19] Ornstein (2000), pg. 33
[20] Ibid, pg. 28
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[22]Beyene, Wosen Y. (2000), pg. I

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