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

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Toronto, Canada
October 2006

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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 million³ (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 Independence⁸, 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 another. 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 Nadjé 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 research¹¹ 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>

¹¹For 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?

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

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

<p>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</p>
<p>No -</p>

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)

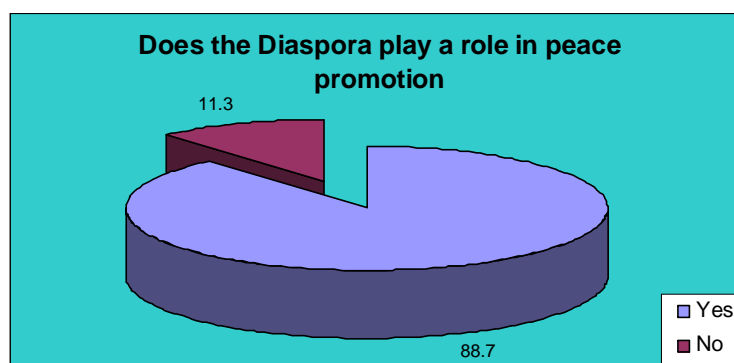


Figure 1

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

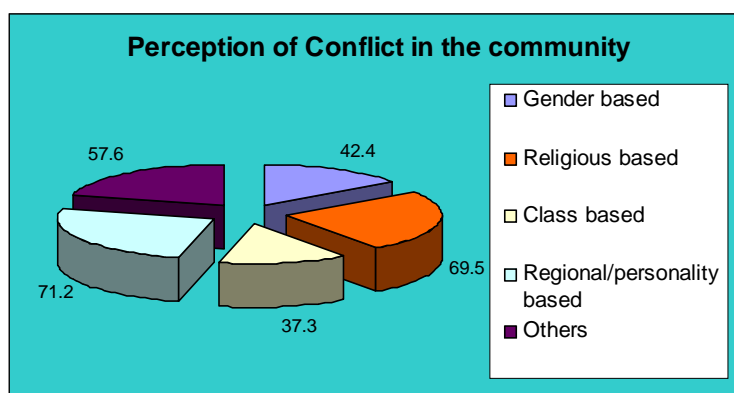


Figure 2

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

- o Conflict is avoided (49%)
- o Conflict is resolved (9%)
- o Conflict becomes more intensified (35%)
- o 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:

- o *We hide it and hope that eventually it will go away without anyone finding out*
- o *We ostracize*
- o *don't talk about it unless in hushed tones*
- o *we are stuck in the past*
- o *we depend on higher authorities to solve our problems while they are the major cause of the problem*
- o *we become defensive and aggressive*
- o *pretend it does not exist*
- o *we attack people, their families, their roots*
- o *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 “Eritreanness” 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 people¹⁶. 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 cities¹⁸. 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_Atsumo.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.

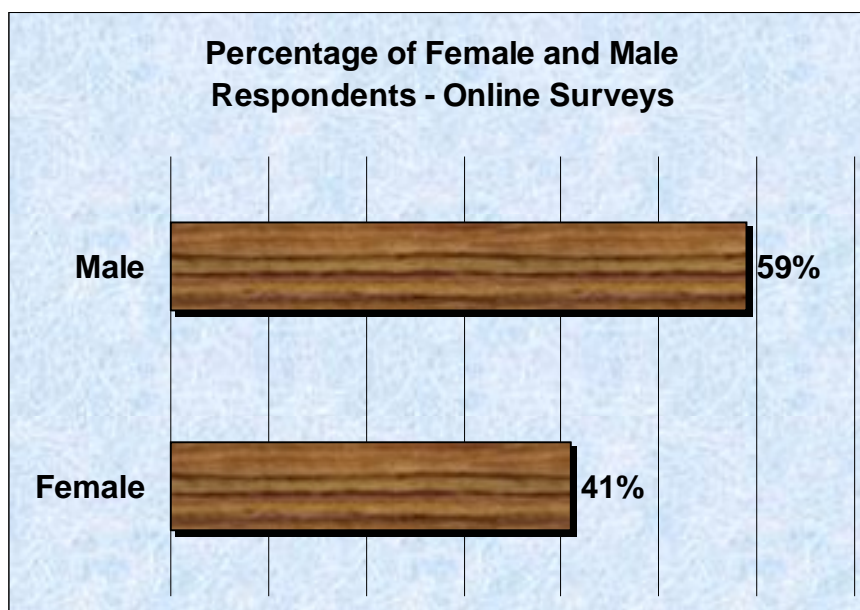


Figure 4

➤ **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.

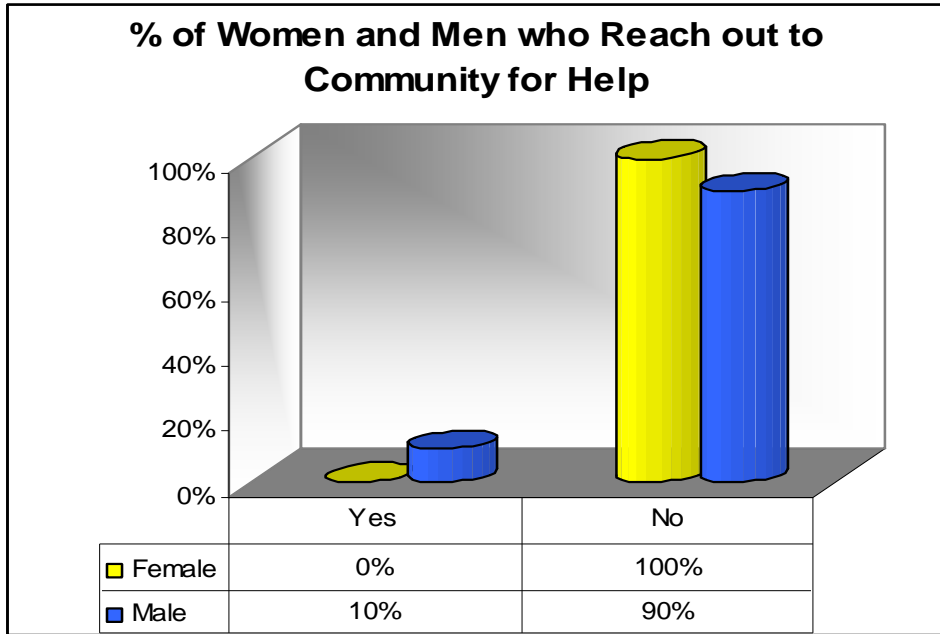


Figure 5

➤ **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.

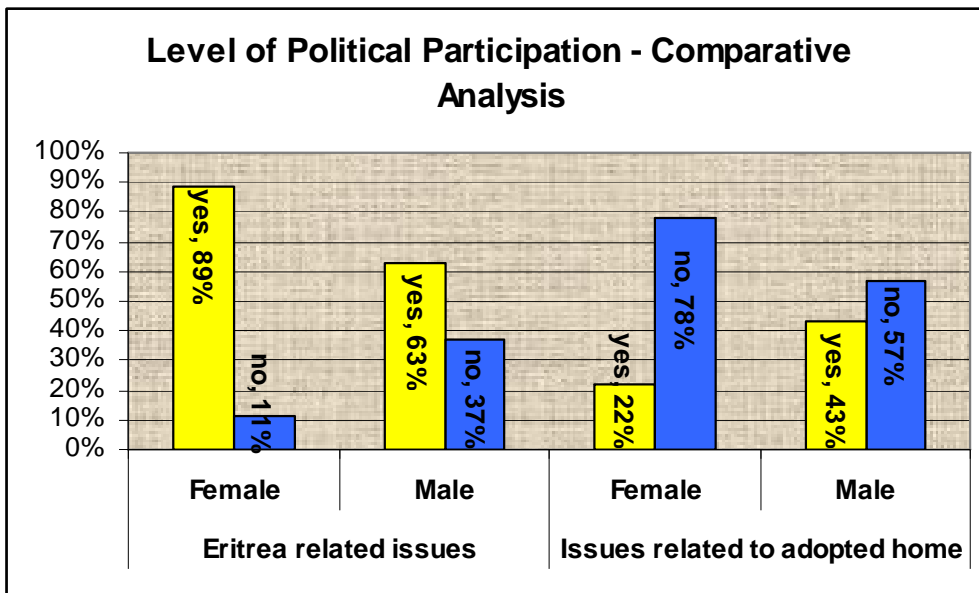


Figure 6

Gender Gaps by Level of Vulnerability and Capacity within the framework of Peacebuilding in the Eritrean Diaspora Community¹⁹

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of safe community spaces - little assimilation to new country's mainstream society - no trust in mainstream conflict resolution mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focus on differences -no formal community structures -lack of leadership and mentoring ability especially for youths with opposing views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No trust in community - Caught between traditional and modern gender roles - Fear of getting involved - Sense of frustration and feeling overwhelmed - Feel unappreciated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited trust in community - More resistant to changes in gender roles - Loss of hope in new generation - No understanding of younger generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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

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

Underlying Causes of Vulnerabilities/ Level of Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conservative social norms and rules marginalizing women's roles and responsibilities - constrained by hearsay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - traditional views on gender roles - perceptions of fragmented community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need to stick to each other in a new country - concerned about their children's future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - concerned about their children's future
Measures needed to address these gaps and vulnerabilities and differences in capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establish safe spaces - create structures that support women's needs - learn how to resolve differences without taking issues personal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - learn to capitalize on similarities and celebrate differences - find healthy ways of exploring divergent opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - open dialogue - encourage women role models to mentor younger women - leadership and empowerment training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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
<p>Women</p> <p>Age Group: 35 – 55+</p> <p>Occupation: Homemakers Working mothers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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
<p>Men</p> <p>Age Group: 35 – 55+</p> <p>Occupation:</p> <p>Occupation:</p>	<p>-Living tighter -Community without conflict -sharing our happiness and sadness -Love and understanding -RESPECT -Leadership, support and unity -Communities getting along with one another - 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.</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>-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</p>	<p>-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</p>

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 losing 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 subconscious, 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)

I'll 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 thought 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 assistance, 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. Tewelde, 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?

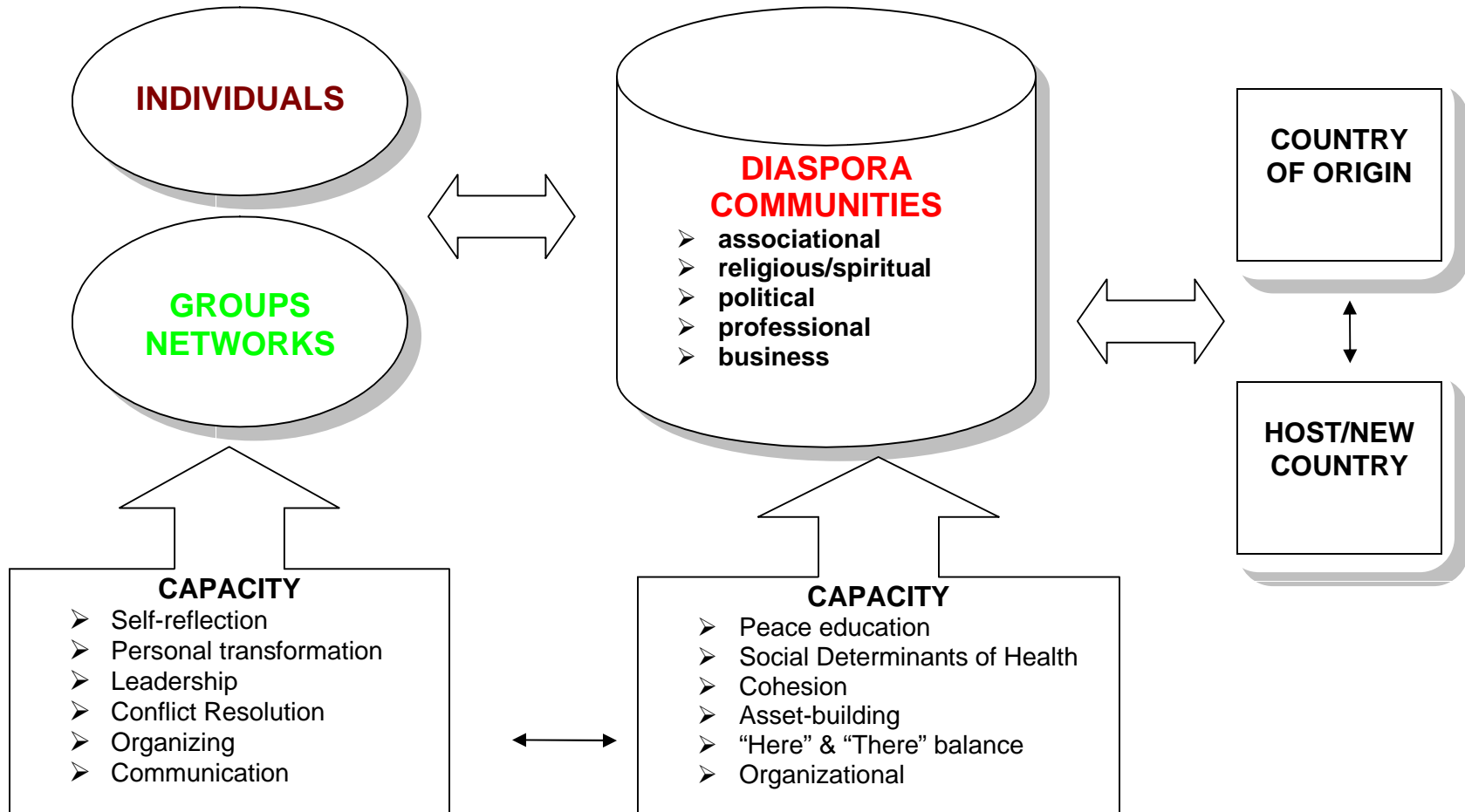
Depending on the interest of diaspora Eritreans, some recommendations of the research may offer opportunities for future engagement. We will inform the community regarding any possibilities for future involvement. For further questions & information, contact us

Selam Peacebuilding Network (SPN):

selampeacenet@gmail.com

Appendix 12: A Diaspora Community Capacity For Peacebuilding Framework

PRINCIPLES: *COMMUNITY-DRIVEN, COLLABORATIVE, ASSET-BASED, INCLUSIVE*



CAPACITY SUPPORTS: *INDIVIDUAL, GROUP/NETWORK, COMMUNITY*