

Young Liberians **Building Peace**

Lessons Learnt from the first
Conflict Prevention Leadership Program

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The Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) is the Swedish government agency for peace, security and development.

FBA supports international peace operations and international development cooperation. The agency conducts training, research and method development in order to strengthen peacebuilding and statebuilding in conflict and post-conflict countries. We also recruit civilian personnel and expertise for peace operations and election observation missions led by the EU, UN and OSCE. The agency is named after Count Folke Bernadotte, the first UN mediator.

FBA is part of the Swedish development cooperation within the field of peace and security, and works with conflict and post-conflict countries, such as Colombia, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Mali, or regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa.

This report is written by Klara Grenhagen, Maja Jakobsson and Karin Hugsén. Edited by Klara Grenhagen. The Conflict Prevention Leadership Program is part of FBA's bilateral development cooperation with Liberia, headed by Lisa Ljungström.

In 2016, FBA received the mandate from the Swedish government to implement parts of the five-year Swedish development cooperation strategy with Liberia. The long-term goal is to support increased human security and freedom from violence, within the areas of security sector reform, rule of law in public administration and peace and reconciliation processes.

A key objective is to make our work as relevant, efficient and strategic as possible, and not at least sustainable. From our perspective, it is of utmost importance to build strong relationships and to work with what we believe we do best – to support and accompany through capacity strengthening, with the constructive and inclusive message of peace at the core.

Many people have contributed to the realization, development and implementation of Conflict Prevention Leadership Program (CPLP). With this report, we want to celebrate as well as highlight the achievements made and share our lessons identified and learned.


Thank you to all involved.

Lisa Ljungström,
Project Manager Liberia, Secretariat for Development Cooperation, FBA

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For close to two decades, stakeholders at home and abroad have made significant contributions to sustaining peace and reconciliation in Liberia. In particular, we reaffirm efforts of the government and people of Sweden during the positive transformation of our society. FBA has developed the Conflict Prevention Leadership Program, which provides opportunities for youth to benefit from capacity building and active involvement in positive transformation throughout our country. The youth have led not only by words, but by actions and positive examples. They have demonstrated willingness to be role models, leading and serving, unafraid to face challenges and champion changes for collective benefit. Their perspectives are now being incorporated within the national framework for conflict prevention, peacebuilding, reconciliation and security. The Office of the National Peace Ambassador looks forward to strengthening the partnership with FBA and accompaniment of the youth in CPLP as they continue to contribute to peace and security.



Reverend William R. Tolbert III
National Peace Ambassador

Sustainable peace requires long-term commitment, broad participation, and an inclusive approach. Sweden recognizes the important role of young people in preventing conflict and is well known for its commitment to inclusivity in peace processes. In a country where the majority of the population is young, the Conflict Prevention Leadership Program plays an important role in ensuring that the voices of young Liberians from all 15 counties are heard and that their perspectives are integrated in ongoing peacebuilding efforts. Although small in its scale, we believe that the program is an important contribution to inclusive and sustainable peace.



Ingrid Wetterqvist
Ambassador of Sweden to Liberia

Foreword

The focus on Youth, Peace and Security has increased during the last years, on a global scale. The notions of inclusivity, participation and rights of young people are in the forefront of the agenda. Peacebuilding processes not excluded, rather the opposite.

Peacebuilding is just that, a process. For any process to be sustainable, inclusivity is key. In Liberia, as in every country, the role and potential of young people is a fundamental part of societal transformation and continuous development.

I had the privilege of attending the graduation of the first Conflict Prevention Leadership Program, in Monrovia 2018, and to spend some time with the talented and dedicated young peace leaders from all over the country. Having been an active youth leader myself, I felt both connected and inspired.

The strength in the diversity and connectivity of CPLP cannot be underrated and the networking aspects of the program plays an important role. Creating conducive environments for dialogue as well as platforms for mutually reinforcing efforts will strengthen the overarching goal of peace and security.

The Folke Bernadotte Academy is named after the Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte, who was the first UN Mediator. Folke Bernadotte based his work for peace and human rights on strong convictions and values, which I believe resonates with the spirit of CPLP.

Within the Swedish Development Cooperation Strategy with Liberia, FBA supports ongoing peace- and statebuilding processes and CPLP constitutes a significant part of our work.



Sven-Eric Söder,
Director General
Folke Bernadotte Academy

Introduction

With this report, the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) wishes to compile and make available the lessons learnt from the first experiences of the Conflict Prevention Leadership Program (CPLP) in Liberia, carried out by FBA and Liberian partners in 2018. Although the following chapters focus on the very specific experiences of this program, we believe that they can be of relevance to anyone interested in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and issues related to youth, peace and security.

Our hope is that the report will be particularly useful to civil society organizations and state actors in Liberia at both national and community level, including our partner organizations and previous and future participants of the program. We also wish to inspire other like-minded stakeholders internationally and illustrate an example of Swedish development cooperation and the work of FBA.

This program is small in its scale and the report is limited in its scope. The conflict analysis which informed the program has not been included here, nor mappings of similar initiatives. The report does not aspire to present a “one size fits all” solution to youth participation in peacebuilding, nor dive deep into theoretical frameworks with regards to conflict prevention. Rather, we want to share the very practical experience of adaptive, long-term peacebuilding engagement with the notion of inclusivity at the centre.

After presenting the aim, objectives, method, and phases of the program, reflections from our different team members are included. Their contribution to the success of the program has been immense and the importance of the resource team cannot be overestimated. In the final chapter, the young Liberian peace leaders themselves reflect on this journey. Just as they have learnt a lot from this experience, there is plenty to be learnt from them.

Why a leadership program for young Liberians?

Liberia suffered two lengthy civil wars between 1989 and 2003, with approximately 250,000 fatalities, and is today one of the world's poorest countries. In 2018, 15 years after the comprehensive peace agreement of 2003¹, the country is considered relatively peaceful and the risk of return to violent national conflict relatively low. However, the fragility of the peace remains a concern, not least at the community level. Root causes of the war are yet to be addressed and challenges remain, including a relatively stalled reconciliation process.

Partly due to the death toll during the wars, Liberia has an exceptionally young population, with 69% of its citizens under the age of 29. Many young Liberians are economically vulnerable and marginalized, seen by many as a potential source of violence and conflict, rather than a constructive group within their communities. In an opinion poll conducted by the Catholic Relief Services in 2016, unemployed young people in the country were considered to be the second largest risk factor for outbreaks of violence. In many conflict-affected countries, young men are stereotypically seen as violent practitioners and young women as victims. Social norms and structures linked to age affect the access of young men and women to power, influence, and rights.

The understanding of young people as a security issue, rather than a resource in peacebuilding, has to a large extent led to the exclusion of youth from peace, reconciliation and reconstruction processes. With the adoption of resolution 2250 and follow-up resolution 2419, the UN Security Council recognized young adults (18-29 years according to the UN definition) as important and positive peace actors. The purpose of the resolutions is to prepare space for youth in issues of peacebuilding and conflict management by taking on their commitment and driving force for change.

Meaningful youth participation and influence in peace and reconciliation processes is a matter of rights, legitimacy, and efficiency. Protecting the rights of young men and women, utilizing their capabilities, and allowing their meaningful participation in society at large are therefore key measures to strengthen societal resistance to conflict, ensure human security, and achieve sustainable peace.

Since 2016, FBA has been assigned to implement parts of the Swedish bilateral development cooperation strategy with Liberia. One of the aims of the 2016-2020 strategy is to contribute to more inclusive national peace and reconciliation processes

¹ "With over a dozen failed peace agreements since the beginning of the war in 1989, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed on 18 August 2003 in Accra, Ghana. The peace talks in Accra started in early June of 2003 and the government, LURD and MODEL were the central actors." Hayne P. *Negotiating peace in Liberia: Preserving the possibility for Justice*, Report November 2007 p.5, p.11.

in Liberia. With a large part of the Liberian population being young, and an identified lack of meaningful and inclusive participation of young people in such processes – particularly those from outside of the capital region – FBA explored the need and possibility to develop a strategic program in response.

In April 2017, FBA participated at the *Liberian Youth Peace Building National Conference*, which was organized as a result of the many efforts of the Embassy of Sweden to create a discussion forum for young Liberians. The conference was financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and supported by the UN and the Accountability Lab. Gathering 200 young participants from the entire country, it provided a great opportunity to meet with young Liberian peacebuilders and organizations. During the conference, FBA held bilateral and consultative meetings with a number of relevant stakeholders.

Later the same year, FBA and Liberian partners developed a concept of a capacity-strengthening program for young peace leaders. The program focused on conflict prevention, dialogue and peace leadership, and was named the *Conflict Prevention Leadership Program* (CPLP). Four Liberian peace and youth organizations were identified as particularly relevant, and consultative dialogue meetings were held, with discussions regarding the needs and ideas on how to set-up the program in the most constructive and relevant way.

In FBA's experience, the impact of short and temporary trainings can be limited. Therefore, CPLP was not developed to be a one-off training, but a long-term capacity-strengthening and network-building program. An additional important aim of CPLP was to strengthen relations between peace leaders from different counties and their organizations, nationally. In order to build this trust, time and strategic methods are needed.

Conflict Prevention Leadership Program

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the program was to prevent violent conflict and increase inclusivity in the conflict prevention and reconciliation processes in Liberia through strengthening the capacity of 15 young peace leaders and their peace organizations in leading, designing and facilitating conflict prevention and transformation initiatives, such as dialogue and mediation efforts. The overall aim could in turn be divided into objectives at three levels:

- Strengthen the capacity and self-confidence of the young Liberian peace leaders in leading, designing and facilitating conflict prevention and transformation initiatives, and particularly dialogue and mediation initiatives = *individual level*

- Strengthen the capacity of four Liberian civil society organizations (CSOs) focusing on youth and peace to work strategically with long-term conflict prevention initiatives, especially through dialogue and mediation efforts = *institutional level of CSOs*
- Increase the level of experience-sharing, networking and constructive collaboration between individual peace leaders, and youth and peace CSOs in Liberia = *national level*

The theory of change behind CPLP is illustrated in the model below.

Participants' learning: Young Liberian peace leaders participate in training which strengthens their capacity in conflict prevention



- Enhanced knowledge of conflict prevention, conflict management, dialogue and mediation
- Strengthened practical skills (facilitation, communication skills, leadership skills)
- Strengthened self-confidence as peace leaders, mediators and dialogue facilitators
- Enhanced inspiration to work on these issues

Participants' behaviour changes: Young Liberian peace leaders use their learning to change their behaviour towards more constructive and effective peace leadership



- The participants change their behaviour as peace leaders, mediators and facilitators, and use their strengthened skills (e.g. in communication, confidence building, analysis and identification of initiatives).
- The participants use continuous self-reflection and tools to develop and lead initiatives, and adapt their actions to needs analysis and self-awareness.

Organizations implement changes: Participants' organizations improve and promote initiatives for conflict prevention and peacebuilding



- The organizations take more active initiatives to prevent and constructively deal with conflict, locally and nationally.
- The organizations use and disseminate their enhanced capacity to initiate, design, lead and facilitate conflict-prevention initiatives.
- Youth peace organizations take more initiatives in conflict prevention in Liberia, and their work becomes more visible.

Prevention of conflict: Young Liberian peace leaders and their organizations effectively use conflict prevention strategies to prevent violent conflicts

In addition to the overall program objectives, a few key learning objectives for the participants were formulated. The participants were, after their participation in all phases of the program, expected to be able to:

- Listen actively and practice mindful communication as peace leaders
- Explain what dialogue and mediation is about when addressing or preventing conflict
- Participate with more confidence in the facilitation and design of conflict prevention and transformation initiatives, and in particular, dialogue processes and mediation efforts
- Exercise leadership within their peace organizations and in their respective counties and communities, with more self-confidence and inspiration.

PARTICIPANTS, PARTNERS AND SELECTION PROCESS



The Conflict Prevention Leadership Program included 15 individuals², one from each of the 15 counties of Liberia. It was important that all counties in Liberia were represented in the program to make CPLP as inclusive as possible, reaching beyond the capital region.

² One of the participants did not comply with the CPLP guidelines and did not complete the program.

All participants came from one of four selected Liberian peace organizations working with conflict prevention, peacebuilding and youth issues. An important criterion in choosing partner organizations was the fact that they were all run *for* young people, or *by* young people, or both. The fact that they were member-based and had national range, with members/volunteers and activities in large parts of the country, was also important. The selected partner organizations were:

Mano River Union Youth Parliament

The Mano River Union Youth Parliament (MRUYP) is a sub-regional network of young peacebuilders, community leaders and activists within the Mano River Union Basin (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and Guinea) that advocates for peace, human rights and the development of young men, women and their communities. MRUYP in Liberia is mainly constituted by a network of 30 parliamentarians – two from each county, of which one is the Speaker.

Messengers of Peace Liberia

Messengers of Peace Liberia (MOP) is a youth-led peacebuilding organization founded in 2008. The objective of MOP is to assist in the consolidation of peace through dialogue and reconciliation by spreading messages of peace and development, as well as promoting the spirit of volunteerism amongst youth. Among other activities, MOP runs peace clubs around the country, as well as campaigns and workshops.

WANEP/WIPNET's Youth Wing

WANEP (West Africa Network in Peace-building) was founded in 1998 and has since been one of Liberia's most active peacebuilding organizations. WIPNET (Women in Peacebuilding Network) is a program of WANEP, and was formed in 2001 to energize women in Liberia to come together for peace. WIPNET led non-violent mass protests staged by women of Liberia in 2003 against the fighting that swept the country at that time. Currently, WANEP/WIPNET is ensuring that there is no generational gap by engaging and mentoring young people in the organization and undertaking initiatives through the WANEP/WIPNET youth wing.

Young Ambassadors for Peace Liberia

Young Ambassadors for Peace Liberia (YAP) is a global youth organization and network for young people from diverse background, founded in 2008 by the Universal Peace Federation in Liberia. YAP promotes peace through locally based peace ambassadors and members and by establishing peace clubs across the country. YAP works with students, community leaders, youth organizations and young leaders and organizes peacebuilding trainings and local and national peace campaigns. The organization brings together youth and community leaders at an annual peace summit aiming to build capacity and discuss different issues affecting young people.

Each organization nominated two active members/volunteers from each of a few assigned counties, and at least half of the organization's nominees had to be female. FBA then conducted interviews during three separate recruitment days and was responsible of the final selection, in order to get a diverse and relevant group.

For a young peace leader to be able to be nominated to the CPLP, they had to:

- Be within the age span of 18 to 35 years old
- Be from and fully based in their respective county
- Be genuinely interested in peacebuilding and conflict prevention
- For at least one year have been active in organized peacebuilding initiatives, and should not only be passive members of the organizations
- Not be “over-trained”

As the selected participants received the news of their selection, they needed to confirm their interest to participate in CPLP, as well as commit to the conditions of participation. These included awareness that no per diems would be paid, that they had to have a genuine interest and take part actively in all phases of the program, as well as behave in a responsible and respectful manner during the program.

Each organization had contributed to the important phases of consultations, which informed FBA's concept development, the nomination process, as well as the continuous process of implementation and deepening the partnership.

FBA collaborated with the Liberian peacebuilding organization Platform for Dialogue and Peace (P4DP) during the entire CPLP process. P4DP works with research and participatory action activities aimed at strengthening the capacities of state and non-state actors to prevent, manage, and transform conflict through collaborative action. Established out of a partnership between the United Nations and Interpeace in 2006, P4DP became an autonomous Liberian non-governmental organization in 2012. It was a key partner and assisted with logistic arrangements and administrative support. Its support has been essential for the implementation of the program.

The CPLP Methodology

“The method and approach of CPLP was genuine. It was not a teacher-student situation. Instead we were like brothers and sisters and that contributed to making us feel seen and heard.”

– Terry Pennue, participant from Grand Gedeh county

Being a long-term capacity-developing and network-building program, an important aim of CPLP was to strengthen relations between peace leaders from different counties and their organizations. As previously mentioned, time and strategic methods are needed in order to build this trust.

The program was thus developed to consist of several phases – three on-site modules, as well as personalized follow-up and mentoring phases in the respective communities of the 15 young peace leaders between the modules. These mentoring visits allowed the opportunity to listen to the participants’ experiences and concerns, and to provide them with personal mentoring and coaching support based on their respective needs. The idea was for the mentor to “accompany” the participants – not necessarily to lead or directly instruct and train, but to listen to the participants and let them lead their initiatives and learning, during which the mentor could be available to provide advice when needed. A metaphor used was that of the peace leaders sitting in the driver’s seat, whereas the mentor/resource team sits in the back seat.

CPLP was developed in line with FBA’s pedagogical profile which: 1) is learner-centred; 2) supports participants’ reflection and awareness of their own learning (“meta-cognition”); and 3) is based on clear learning objectives. The methodical approach focused on motivating and challenging the participants to become more knowledgeable, competent and motivated as peace leaders. A variety of methods were used, which takes into account different learning styles. CPLP focused a lot on personal development and working with one’s own personal skills, values and leadership style.

To be able to respond to needs raised, CPLP took an adaptive approach. As an example, it was decided to add two important features to the second mentoring phase, based on identified needs. During this mentoring phase, the participants received additional support to conduct a minor peacebuilding activity. A peer-to-peer system also enabled each participant to receive support in the facilitation of this (see also page on Mentoring phase 2).

Examples of methods used during the program

- Role play
- Presentations and input
- Case studies and learning from other contexts
- Experience-sharing
- Discussions in plenary and smaller groups
- Interactive exercises
- Structured reflection, individually and in groups
- Peer and mentor support (accompaniment)

CONTENT OF THE PROGRAM

First Module – Paynesville, Liberia

“I appreciated that CPLP gathered people from all the counties and that we, as participants, have been part of the process. You don’t see that kind of inclusive process within our institutions. It created a sense of togetherness and, over a period of time, CPLP felt like a family.”

– Jefferson N. Weafar, participant from Lofa county

The participants gathered for the first module in Paynesville, Liberia. Besides being a great opportunity for the CPLP participants and the resource team to get to know each other and learn more about the participants’ involvement in peacebuilding work around Liberia, the module also laid the foundations for some of the key themes of the program.

Key concepts, such as conflict prevention, dialogue and mediation, were introduced, and story-telling and mindful communication were practiced in interactive exercises. The participants and resource team members also shared experiences and discussed the concept of peace leadership, with exercises to stimulate self-reflection.

A key issue that challenged participants during the module was the understanding of conflict. Joint reflection sessions made the participants realize that conflict is indeed a natural component between people and in societies, and that this also means that how one manages – and not avoids – conflict in a constructive way, is key.

The module succeeded in creating a certain level of trust within the group. This was fundamental, not only to create a safe space for learning and

exploring throughout the program, but also to develop positive and sustainable relations in the group. Although group dynamics and trust-building was expected to make up an important part of the first module, it turned out early on that even more time was required for this. Re-scheduling slightly, some thematic areas and sessions were postponed to the coming modules.

A lesson for FBA was indeed to focus strategically on trust-building and investing time in getting to know each other during the first module of new rounds of CPLP. This investment will pay off well later in the process.

First Mentoring Phase

“I was struck by how those who were quiet and shy at the beginning began to exhibit more confidence and a clear sense of direction as the programme continued.”

– Nomfundo Walaza, resource team member

To reinforce the learning process and leadership development of the CPLP participants, William (Bill) Saa, from the resource team, conducted a follow-up and mentoring phase, with support from FBA staff. Bill travelled around the counties of Liberia to conduct individual visits to the participants in each of their respective communities. He listened to their experiences and concerns, and provided personal mentoring and coaching support to each of them based on their respective needs and their different local contexts.

During the first follow-up and mentoring phase, CPLP participants raised several challenges to their next steps as peace leaders. Two key challenges were identified by almost all participants; firstly, a lack of confidence to inde-

pendently implement a peacebuilding activity in their environment, and to request continuous support. Secondly, they raised a key challenge in reaching out to community members and encouraging their active voluntary participation in their peacebuilding activities, in particular related to the need to manage expectations of them receiving financial compensation for their participation in meetings.

The mentoring phase came to be pivotal in several ways. One important aspect was that it contributed to the CPLP resource team's understanding of the local realities and the individual capabilities, which enabled the program to be even more tailor-made to the needs in the group. Another contribution that should not be underestimated is the trust that was built between each participant and the Liberian resource person, and in the long run the entire CPLP resource team. It was seen as a highly symbolic gesture to have someone visit them in their home communities, despite the long distances and difficult road conditions, and the participants, many of whom had never participated in a similar program, felt heard and seen.

Second Module – Sandö and Stockholm, Sweden

“I believe that CPLP opened up our minds and put us on the right track. We also got to visit Sweden and got the opportunity to interact with people with whom we never would have been able to meet otherwise. I know now that peacebuilding is a process, not an event.”

– Ruth Fatu Armah, participant from Margibi county

The second module was an adventure for the participants as it meant travelling abroad – and for the first time ever for many of them. The module

took place in Sweden at the FBA training centre in Sandö, followed by two days in the capital city of Stockholm.

At Sandö, the module deepened the learning and reflections in relation to dialogue and peace leadership. Mindful communication was on the agenda, just as during the first module, and the concept of dialogue was explored thoroughly, both in relation to other concepts and to the Liberian context. The participants further explored different challenges as peace leaders; how to engage community members, how to collaborate, and what are the ways to enable sustainability of peace efforts?

During the days in Stockholm, the participants made study visits and met with key Swedish stakeholders, including the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA). One central part of the days in the capital was a participatory workshop on the theme of youth, peace and security. The workshop welcomed not only the CPLP participants, but also Swedish youth and peace civil society organizations and representatives from a few key Swedish state actors, such as FBA, Sida, and MFA. Based on the youth, peace and security agenda, the participants were assigned to work together in mixed working groups to explore how different stakeholders can work jointly to encourage youth perspectives and participation in peacebuilding.

A study visit was made to the Swedish foundation “Fryshuset”, which works with dialogue and social projects directed at young people. Fryshuset uses story-telling as an approach to build trust between people, and it performed a practical story-telling exercise with the group.

The second module contributed to deepening the level of trust in the group, which was further strengthened by the fact that many experienced somewhat of a culture chock. Many things were completely new to them – from riding in

an escalator, not to mention an airplane, to experiencing the nature of the High Coast Area, a UNESCO World Heritage site in the north of Sweden. These experiences also considerably empowered the participants and they returned to Liberia with further strengthened self-confidence and broadened horizons.

After a very productive and active program in Sweden, a few challenges arose during the last days of the module. Upon the return to Liberia, one participant unexpectedly chose to leave the program, which created much disappointment, worry and frustration in the group. At the same time, the flight was delayed for two days. The participants had to manage with this unforeseen situation and did it in a responsible way, trying to support each other and make the best out of it. In the end, the experience brought the participants closer to each other. In the midst of it all, they initiated a discussion on how they would continue to work as a network even beyond the scope of CPLP.

Second Mentoring Phase and Minor Peacebuilding Activity

“In addition to providing technical support and personal motivation, I spent time with the participants to determine other needs and concerns they felt. Overall, they expressed much more sense of confidence to embark on community-driven peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives.”

– Bill Saa, resource team member

The second mentoring phase included two new aspects and more ambitious objectives. One additional component was to provide the CPLP participants with support to implement a practical minor peacebuilding activity in their

home community. This was a direct response to the challenges raised around limited confidence to facilitate such activities, as well as the struggle to engage local community members.

The second aspect was a “peer-to-peer” system, which created an opportunity for the CPLP participants to work together, by joining one of the other participant’s mentoring visits and providing co-facilitation during the implementation of their respective minor peacebuilding activity. This aspect of the exercise aimed to enhance networking and collaboration among the CPLP members, as well as afford them the opportunity of cross learning from their different experiences. The minor peacebuilding activity exposed the young peace leaders within their communities. The activities they chose to implement ranged from workshops in dialogue and mediation, to meetings on the importance of peace clubs in local schools. More than 200 Liberians took part in the activities, and as a result, communities have now begun to recognize the participants’ intentions and role as peace leaders. Several CPLP participants now also have peers who want to continue working together with them.

This practical phase to the program, where the participants were further challenged to take on the role as facilitators and local peace leaders, gave them a chance to truly “learn by doing”. It was obvious to the resource team that the participants gained self-confidence and inspiration after this achievement, and hopefully have better conditions to plan and implement similar activities by themselves in the future. The fact that each participant had to develop and facilitate their own activity, rather than getting a session script authored by someone else, contributed to ensuring that the activities were contextually relevant and owned by the participants themselves.

“Old wounds from the conflict are still not healed and reconciliation has not taken root. The frustration among Liberia’s young population, with high levels of unemployment, has the potential to re-ignite conflict. Creating a pool of young peacebuilding professionals, who will work alongside the older people to engage their peers, will help to mitigate conflict and allow for peaceful co-existence.”

– Victoria Wollie, Head of organization, WANEP/WIPNET

The third and last module gathered inspired participants in Monrovia, Liberia. They had all been very active since the last CPLP interaction and had gained more confidence. Experiences and insights were exchanged and the participants were further challenged. The focus of the module was to deepen the understanding and skills-building with regards to dialogue, and to further develop self-reflection and capacity as peace leaders.

The module invested time into proper planning and preparation for the Dialogue Day that was to be held on the penultimate day. The participants, supported by FBA and the CPLP resource team, invited key government officials to a dialogue and strategic conversation. The dialogue was guided by the following question: “What would it take for all Liberians, including the young generation, to work together in order to build a peaceful country?”

The Dialogue Day was opened by the Ambassador of Sweden to Liberia, Ingrid Wetterqvist, and the FBA Director-General Sven-Eric Söder. The meeting gathered around 30 participants and the process generated a constructive first dialogue around the issue of inclusive peacebuilding, and

important future contacts were established. The four partner organizations were represented by their leadership, and representatives of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, including Vice Minister on Youth Development, the Peacebuilding Office, the Independent National Human Rights Commission, and the National Peace Ambassador were present.

Apart from being an important first explorative dialogue opportunity, the day also provided opportunities to network and to establish contact and trust between the CPLP participants and the invited stakeholders. This has proven to be helpful in the months after the dialogue, and enabled the CPLP participants to gain an access they did not have before. Although it was not possible to arrive at a full answer to the complex dialogue question, a number of helpful joint reflections were raised, and a sense of joint responsibility was created.

The CPLP resource team debriefed the Dialogue Day in depth, in order to further strengthen the participants’ understanding of facilitated dialogue, as well as their practical facilitation and leadership skills. The last day and the closing ceremony provided an opportunity to appreciate the commitment and the deep learning process which the CPLP participants had concluded.

What did we learn?

1. PARTNERSHIP IS KEY – AND REQUIRES CONSCIOUS WORK

The program aimed at contributing to behavioural change, not only at an individual level but also within the participants' organizations. The cooperation between FBA and the four participating Liberian organizations was crucial in this regard, but the partnership went beyond that. Without their contributions, the program would likely have been less successful and relevant to the Liberian context. They played an important role not least in the nomination process, by identifying suitable participants for the program, grounded in their communities and with a genuine engagement for peace work. There have been challenges, and the partnership has required time, commitment and conscious work. As a result, FBA and the organizations have experienced an increased level of trust, which shows in a more open and honest communication, where shortcomings and challenges can be brought up in a natural way.

2. THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS REQUIRED FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

To put sufficient thought, time and effort into the recruitment process is, of course, key to finding suitable and motivated participants. Although the first recruitment process consisted of several components and considerable time was invested, FBA and partners identified a few important challenges. For instance, the key criteria for participants to be fully based in the county they

represent, as well as the level of personal maturity of the nominees, needed to be further assured. For the second round of CPLP, a few changes have already been implemented. Now, the nomination form requires a second and local guarantor, and an additional and external verification process – between the nomination and before the interviews – has been added.

3. LOGISTIC NEEDS REQUIRE CONSIDERABLE TIME AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

CPLP's inclusive approach and the fact that the participants came from all over the country generated extensive logistic needs. A number of very practical challenges arose, such as many participants' lack of birth certificates and passports, which was needed for the travel to Sweden". Early on, FBA identified a Liberian administrative and logistics partner to get practical support. Their contribution to the program was especially important given that FBA does not have permanent staff in Liberia. Developing sustainable and practical routines and guidelines demanded considerable effort, and often practical problem-solving. A number of changes have been made in preparation for the next round of the program, and the cooperation around the very practical aspects of the program is being further developed.

4. INDIVIDUAL MENTORING SUPPORT IS CRUCIAL

A key lesson for FBA is that the individual mentoring support in-between the modules was just as – or even more – important than the modules themselves. The approach of accompaniment and individual mentoring truly contributed to the quality of the program, not least by building the self-confidence of the participants and showing them that they are not alone. It also helped reaffirming our commitment and gave the resource team an understanding of the challenges the participants face in their communities – and ideas of how to support them in overcoming those. The importance of individual mentoring support is something the participants themselves underscore, and it clearly shows in how their confidence and skills have grown and in the increased level of trust within the diverse group.

5. A DIVERSE TEAM IS IMPORTANT – LOCAL KNOWLEDGE IS INDISPENSABLE

FBA had a well-functioning and professional resource team which apart from FBA staff included both international and Liberian team members. Having international experts in the team enabled us to tap into their extensive experience from various different peacebuilding initiatives. Together with the Liberian peacebuilding expert and FBA staff members with different focus areas, a diverse and dynamic team was created. The Liberian team member, who especially supported FBA in making sure that the program was adapted

to the local context, contributed extensively to the success of the program. Realizing the risk of being dependent on one person, FBA will work with at least one more Liberian resource person in the future and also explore ways to foster experience-sharing and mentorship within our resource team.

6. AN ADAPTIVE APPROACH IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE AND RELEVANT

Although FBA had developed a concept and carefully prepared for the implementation of CPLP, the team challenged themselves to continuously keep an adaptive and iterative approach to the implementation as the program developed. In practice, this would for instance mean that the details of the two mentoring phases were developed along the course of the process, as the CPLP resource team gained more in-depth understanding of the needs of the participants, and the realities they were facing in their communities. FBA's conclusion is that this approach requires flexibility, good cooperation and extra effort. However, it clearly helps guide the program to be as strategic and context relevant as possible.

Reflections from resource team members

Below, three of the resource team members share their personal thoughts of the CPLP journey, each of them from different angles and in relation to their respective roles. Although based on the specific experience of the program, we believe that they can also be of relevance to other like-minded actors in the field of youth and peacebuilding.

ACCOMPANYING LIBERIA'S FUTURE LEADERS – REFLECTIONS BY WILLIAM (BILL) SAA

Training in the sense of meeting in a room to discuss subject matters is important and helps enhance knowledge, but the most critical element is how that knowledge is utilized. With this in mind, a lot of effort was put into mentorship periods between the modules of CPLP. The participants were also given the task to implement a minor peacebuilding activity in their respective communities. During 2018, I drove around to all of Liberia's 15 counties to visit our young peace leaders in their respective home environments and support them in this work.

One could call it mentorship or doing “follow-up”, but I would prefer the term *accompaniment*. Because it is not about monitoring and evaluation, not about measuring results, but about reassuring the participants that they are not alone. Accompaniment for us in CPLP is a way to see how knowledge is utilized, but more importantly, intended to show them that they can count on our support. That there is someone there who is by their side, to help them gain confidence.

Many of the participants, being used to evaluations and assessments, were initially preparing carefully for my visits; “Uncle Bill, we thought you were going to give us a test!” With

time, they knew my visits were more like having a friend over, asking them “how are you, how's it going?” With no need to hide your weaknesses, no stress of being assessed, you can build trust. That honest relationship is what ultimately stimulates growth and development.

During the implementation of the minor peacebuilding activities – which for example could be workshops on dialogue or the importance of local peace clubs – the young peace leaders offered to let me make introductory remarks. But I always said I rather be the last, sitting in the back of the room and letting them take the lead. That is what we think mentorship should be like; allowing the participants to take the steering wheel.

The participants, most of them who never dreamed of actively being involved in peacebuilding and conflict prevention in their communities, have now gained the confidence and motivation to do just that. Their communities have begun to trust and recognize them as young peace leaders, expressing commitment and willingness to support them in their peacebuilding activities.

In fact, a couple of the CPLP participants are now intervening in community disputes. With a newly gained confidence, they are contributing to preventing and resolving local conflicts. And what is interesting is that they have been consulting each other in these efforts, that the network we hoped would take form really exists and works. Young peace leaders from different parts of the country are supporting each other when fostering peace in their respective communities!



To me, it would be the gravest sadness if the young people, considered the future leaders of the country, do not have a sense of where the country is supposed to go, especially in a country like Liberia, where the youth have been deprived of a future because of the civil war. Violence has become ingrained in their mentality.

To transform this mentality and encourage youth to take responsibility for the future they want to see is, in my opinion, the most meaningful intervention that can be performed for Liberia.

Or else we are wasting time. The youth must take responsibility, and have a vision and the knowledge and skills to implement that vision. And that is what CPLP is trying to contribute to.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVITY AND TRUSTING THE PROCESS

– REFLECTIONS BY MAJA JAKOBSSON

From the first time I went to Liberia in April 2017 and until now, I have learnt more about peacebuilding, inclusion, dialogue, trust-building and facilitation than during any period before. In fact, there are many concepts, processes and assumptions that I have been familiar with during my 15 something years of working with peacebuilding, but somehow it is after this experience that they really practically and entirely make sense. There are so many lessons that I, and the FBA as an agency, have learnt. Here are two of my personal key lessons.

Firstly, inclusion costs, but the investments clearly pay off.

Early on, thanks to the many meetings, consultations and generous sharing of perspectives of Liberian peacebuilders and key actors, it became obvious that inclusion would indeed have to be at the centre of the initiative that we were about to develop. During our initial consultations, many individuals raised the inherent challenge of getting a multitude of people and perspectives to be included in peacebuilding processes in Liberia. For instance, even if a few young individuals occasionally got invited to such forums, they did not represent much more than a dozen well-established, Monrovia-based youth leaders. For someone living in a rural community in the south east of Liberia, the distance to these forums is far, and the opportunities few.

Together with our partners, we concluded that our idea of a long-term capacity-building and network-building program would only make sense if it included representatives of each of the 15 counties of Liberia. We knew this would demand extra effort, and, in fact, it did cost a lot of extra resources. Not only financial ones, but probably even more in terms of time and staff resources, as well as continuous problem-solving.

An example is the creative problem-solving that had to take place in preparation for the module in June 2018, which took place in Sweden and therefore required visas for all participants. As some did not have the birth certificate needed to get a passport, this group had to travel to Monrovia in January to administrate that, and again spend time there to get their passports, before the first module in February. Only then were all 15 ready to apply for Swedish visas. FBA indeed had to work creatively to make CPLP possible, but the ones who by far made the most effort were the participants. It was Terry and Emily and others who travelled up to five days one way, on sometimes non-existent muddy roads, to

take part in each phase of the program. That is a commitment without which CPLP would have been nothing.

Inclusivity demands investment, but the beautiful and hopeful part is to see how it actually pays off, such as in seeing the growing self-confidence of someone who never before had a similar opportunity. The unique composition of the group has created a sense of strong and national togetherness. The participants describe this to be their biggest pride, having been part of CPLP. I believe that this togetherness also helped the participants and us in the resource team even in difficult times. The most heart-breaking and challenging moment was when our participant Aletha tragically passed away. When gathering for the third and last module, we arranged a dinner in memory of Aletha and invited her closest family. Taking initiative and supporting each other and Aletha's family, no matter the background, made the group even closer. The memory of a lost friend is now cherished by their continued commitment to work for peace all around Liberia.

Secondly, trusting the process and being adaptive is the basis of effective peacebuilding.

This approach has many implications, and most of all, it tells me that as much as we should know where we would like to go, we should not think that there is only one predetermined way to get there. In fact, such "stuckness" may even risk us not arriving at the end destination at all.

I am happy that FBA has been able to use an adaptive approach in the course of the development and implementation of CPLP. One concrete example of this is how the mentoring phases developed. Before the program started, we had an idea of wanting to integrate a mentoring element in-between the modules but had not determined exactly how. We took a conscious decision to first get to know the participants and their realities better. We soon realized that individual

mentoring, in each person's home community, would be the most relevant and helpful approach. A few months later, at the second module, the participants came back with experiences and insights, and identified challenges. We took note of these, and spent the two weeks following the module integrating their perspectives and needs in our planning of the second mentoring phase.

The idea to add an element of support to the participants in facilitating a minor peacebuilding activity responded to the need to further strengthen their confidence as facilitators and peace leaders, as well as to the common challenge to attract and inspire community members to join their local peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, the peer-to-peer component was developed to further strengthen self-confidence and facilitation skills by additional practice ("learning by doing"), and at the same time strengthen trust and the strong relations within the CPLP group. Had we been stuck with the preliminary plans made six months before, the different phases would not have been as relevant as they ended up being.

We soon realized that process is more important than content, and that we needed to focus on a few things more in depth. But more than anything, we needed to focus on the process that was emerging: the building of relationships and the various issues that were brought up organically by the participants.

Throughout the program, I have had to challenge myself to simply trust the process, and to be comfortable even when everything is not planned in detail, or when things change along the course. Thanks to CPLP, and the commitment of my colleagues, our partners and participants, I can now fully sense that as much as one should be prepared, working in an adaptive way is the only way to accomplish strategic peacebuilding initiative. We need to be open to question our assumptions, to change our plans, and let the participants and context guide the process –

without ever losing sight of the final destination and the objective.

HOW TO STRENGTHEN AND INSPIRE YOUNG PEACE LEADERS

– REFLECTIONS BY CHRIS SPIES

Young people under the age of 30 make up more than half of the world's population. The quest to unleash the vast potential this generation holds starts with radically challenging belief systems we have held onto for a long time, the terminology we use, the quality of the shared spaces, and the processes we have held on to for dear life in the firm belief that they work. Here are some of the lessons I have learned.

Firstly, we learn more from young people than they learn from us.

For some reason older people think they can teach younger people about almost everything. Sadly, many young people reinforce this stereotype by believing that leaders ought to be people who are more experienced and older. This mindset reflects a certain level of inflexibility in an outdated dominant paradigm that has long outlived its shelf-life. Young people are not empty vessels and older people not necessarily the fountains of wisdom, who can legitimately claim an exclusive right to shape the minds of the younger generation through "training and capacity building" workshops.

People of my generation cannot pretend that we have all the answers to guide young people in a fast changing world. In my experience, young people are much smarter, have the ability to be more innovative, and are far more resilient than we tend to think or acknowledge. The wisdom and abundance to navigate and lead in the 21st century lie "in and between us" (Parker Palmer).

Secondly, creating a safe and uncomfortable space fosters genuine human interaction.

For the past thirty-six years I have worked in different capacities with a wide range of people in different countries. Whether I was the lead facilitator of UN Resident Coordinators retreats or co-facilitator of life-changing Unyoke retreats in South Sudan, *we always sat in circles* – not in classrooms settings. I came to accept that the initial resistance from lower level UN organizing staff who preferred a more formal setting (head table, protocol, podium, data-projector, etc.) had more to do with their own fears within a context of power than with the reality that, no matter your status, human beings value spaces where the “quality of presence” (Lederach) matters more than ego-massages or perceived personal safety zones.

Thirdly, we change not because we are told to think differently, but because we experience something differently.

It takes courage to disrupt existing terminology, current paradigms and longstanding practices. In my experience it is possible to be more creative, but it takes courage to break the chains of habits that alienate us from our common humanness. There is an abundance of knowledge out there in classrooms, on the internet and in the media. So why do we think that telling people what we think they ought to know is more important than holding a space for genuine interaction, such as having quality one-on-one and small group conversations, walking in nature, deep story-telling, listening, art, poetry, playing and having fun together, dancing, singing and eating together? These are ways of working that engage people’s brains, bodies and spirits fully and creatively. What makes us think that reading bullet points on slides is the most effective way of learning and discovery? Why are programs often packed to the rafters with superficial ways of engaging, and participants kept busy

with listening to “experts” from mornings to evenings? Why do we still talk about “training” and not about “mutual exploration” and “practice sessions”?

In my experience, people learn by discovering and doing. That requires a commitment to re-humanize and authenticate our processes and approaches. Our task is not to lull people into familiar spaces or a false sense of comfort. Our task is to make it sufficiently safe for discomfort that pushes people to “learn, unlearn and relearn” (Alvin Toffler).

Finally, inter-generational accompaniment requires a commitment to nurture and sustain relationships over the long term.

In my experience, this is achieved in the most sustainable ways through journeys of accompaniment. Accompaniment, in the musical sense of the word, means that the sole responsibility of the accompanier is to create the background music and space for the main instrumentalist to shine. The accompanier always supports, never dominates, and never seeks the limelight and credit. He or she can only be a good accompanier when there is deep listening, attunement, and humility.

There is a reason why we are called *human beings*. We are humans who discover how to be with one another and make sense of what we experience.

Accompaniment starts with a commitment to walk together for as long as it takes, regardless of project timelines and budgetary constraints. Practicing a “discipline of being available” is crucial to reassuring one another that we are not alone. It is in walking together that we jointly explore our common path and face our shared emerging future step by step. No one has all the answers. “Traveller, there is no path. Paths are made by walking” (Antonio Machado).

Voices from young Liberian peace leaders



On the coming pages, each of the participants reflects on his or her CPLP experience. They are sharing their very personal journey, about how they first got involved in peacebuilding in their home county, how they started engaging in the organization in which they are active, what they took away from CPLP, and where they want to go next.

Already in the early analytical phases, FBA and partners identified a lack of perspectives from young people in rural areas, and the program has been developed based on the conviction that young Liberians from all over the country deserve to play a role in peacebuilding and in society at large. The voices from the young peace leaders mirror the diversity of the country and its counties. Although facing different realities in their communities, the participants share the determination to contribute to a more peaceful Liberia.



ALLEN KOLLIE, 33

Nimba county, WANEP/WIPNET's youth wing

I live in an area with a lot of concession, so early on I was interested in social responsibility. I first started volunteering for WIPNET when I got to learn about peace and women's issues from an elderly woman from my community. She was part of WANEP and used to go from community to community to spread messages of peace on the radio. But anytime she tried to go to a radio station she was afraid, so I started to escort her. During these walks to the radio stations, she started informing me about peace work, gender based violence, and women's issues. On many occasions, the women weren't able to send their message on the radio since people were questioning them. I realized we needed to strengthen women's rights, so I joined WIPNET and started to do my own radio program to send peace messages and motivate people, especially the youth.

People in the city have more opportunities than us in the rural areas, but CPLP had an inclusive approach and gave us exposure. After receiving the CPLP training we are now able to go to other places and we get invited to talk about peace.

Through CPLP, I have strengthened my confidence to talk to people about peace work. I now have the education and knowledge to talk about conflict prevention and management, dialogue and facilitation. As a youth it puts me on my feet; we deserve peace and youth has a role to play in the peace processes in our communities.

After CPLP I will continue our work and encourage young people. I will tell them to work harder so that maybe they can be accepted and become a part of Liberia. Of course there will be many challenges. When we are moving from community to community we walk most of the time. Another challenge is that youth are engaged to earn money. It is difficult to convince people to volunteer, or to explain that volunteerism can lead to greater things in the future. Sometimes people think we get paid in CPLP and expect us to have money when we get back to our communities, but we don't get paid. We are volunteers.

I want people to know of the work of the Swedish government in peacebuilding. A lot of people are not involved, but when they see external actors working with Liberian brothers they understand its importance. I want a similar system, so we can do the same. CPLP gave us the training and education and now we can share that with others.



BLESSING KALLON, 21

Bomi county, Messengers of Peace

I got involved in peacebuilding through the establishment of peace clubs in my school when I was in ninth grade. We used to have meetings and organized occasional workshops. The Messengers of Peace were reaching out to young people in my community and that is how I got involved and joined the organization. Together with Messengers of Peace we went to other counties and organized workshops and theatres, as well as campaigns to prevent electoral violence before the elections in 2017.

Since I joined CPLP I have acquired more knowledge about peacebuilding, how to mediate between two parties, and how to engage young people. The Dialogue Day we had in module three taught me how to organize dialogue.

The main achievement of CPLP is the change in attitude within me. I used to carry around a lot of anger and I had difficulties relating to other

people in certain ways, but through CPLP my behaviour and mindset have changed.

I appreciated the combination of methods used in the training, as well as the playful elements and social activities included in the modules. We also had the experience of visiting other places which was good, as a change of environment is good for the mind. I didn't expect all the interaction, everything we shared between each other, or the fact that the resource team called to check up on me between the modules. I really like the fact that we came up with ideas and solutions together in a sense that everybody was equal.

My future plans are to engage in girl's empowerment, trying to get them involved in various activities. Girls are not really involved in activities in my county, so I want to organize special activities just for girls, maybe in agriculture. I also want to engage more in youth development, for example advocating for scholarships and better schools. We need to build the skills and capacity of the youth in Liberia. When there are no opportunities or future prospects for the youth, boys turn to the street and girls go into prostitution. Advocating for peace and jobs is advocating for youth development.

I'm so proud to be part of CPLP. Now, I'm a peace leader.



BOAKAI KAMARA, 34

Gbarpolu county, Young Ambassadors for Peace

I work as a volunteer for Young Ambassadors for Peace. Due to my orientation as a youth activist and as a student leader when I was in university, I was involved in advocating for activism and took part in demonstrations and protests. I quite soon realized that protesting was not good for me and was not yielding any results, so I got into peace work through YAP. I learned how to live in harmony and peace with others, and my capacity has been built further by CPLP.

CPLP is unique in the way that people come into the program with one way of thinking and upon completing it emerge with a different mindset. For me personally this is evident in the change of perception of not using radical approaches but rather using non-violent approaches. I would describe CPLP as a program that refines people, refines their perceptions, changes their mindset, and makes them more responsible when engaging in different situations.

I really appreciated the trip to Sweden where I had the opportunity to interact with Swedish civil society organizations and exchange ideas

and experiences with them. This really helped me with my understanding and how to apply ideas in my own situation.

One skill you need as a peace leader is active listening. If you have poor listening skills, you will make uninformed decisions in any given situation. The training in dialogue and mediation helps me a lot in my work as a peace leader.

The main achievement for me is that we have established peace clubs in various schools and mitigated situations amongst student and hence not burdened the administration. We are at the beginning of a roadmap to a peaceful and conducive atmosphere for young people in Liberia. In my community we are discussing peace, and I consider that an achievement.

With help from FBA and the resource team I realized the importance of peace, and my skills in problem-solving have developed. My next steps as a peace leader are to continue to engage my community and county. The challenge ahead is how to address the sustainability aspect. I need other people to work with me, as I can't do everything alone. I will not be a youth all my life and others must be ready take over, so I need to build the capacity of others. I would like the CPLP mentorship to continue and that we can find a way to sustain what we do so we can continue working within our county and country.



CECILIA BEN, 24

Rivercess county, Messengers of Peace

I first started working with peace by volunteering in my home county Rivercess. I later got involved in Messengers of Peace from which I received training in early warning, dialogue, and mediation.

The main thing I discovered being part of the CPLP program is that I now know that as a mediator you are not the solution to a problem. You cannot walk in and present a solution; instead you need to apply active listening and mindful communication. That means, when someone else is speaking you have to pay close attention to fully understand, and you have to be mindful in everything that you are doing.

A peace activity that I have been undertaking is having community meetings in different communities, talking to people, especially young people, about the importance of peace. Young people have to behave themselves so we will not be seen as the troublemakers. I have a peace club in school, and after this program I will go back and try to start another peace club in my county.

What I really liked about this program is that uncle Bill came to visit us in our communities when we had our minor peacebuilding activity. Because of that peace activity – we had a meeting – people in my community now recognize me as a peace leader. That meeting also encouraged more people to volunteer to join me and my peacebuilding work.

I want people to know the importance of peace, because without peace we would not be able to live in a better society. If we have peace, and if we live peacefully, we can build a better society. If there was still war, I would be in the bush, in the villages and be afraid. It is because of peace I am able to be here today and I would like my friends to know that peace is important to us, it is important to society.



EMILY DENNIS, 20

Grand Kru county, Young Ambassadors for Peace

I got involved in peace work when I was in seventh or eighth grade when we had training about how to make children's rights accepted in rural counties and communities. The officer from that program decided to take me on and from his help and all the children's support I was able to advocate on behalf of the children. I always went to the radio station to talk about children's rights and I went to Monrovia for training. But as soon as you are 18 years old and above, you are no longer a child and you have to waive your position to someone younger in the program. So what we do now is that every Saturday we have radio programs where children can speak about their rights. We make sure that they sit in the county decision-making, and through this, children will be recognized and they will be heard. Together with YAP we are working in the community to ensure young people are peaceful.

I choose peace because of others and from the support of my local YAP group, I'm able to be here. And if they can support me to be here, then I am able to transform so that I can support others. With peace, we will have a better Liberia; we will have better families.

The most valuable insight from CPLP is that I should be the light to others. What I learned shouldn't die with me and I should be able to give it to others who need it. To share this knowledge and train others who need it, and with the help of our connections, I will be able to do that. However, it takes courage to take youth on board in our local areas, especially those who have dropped out of school. It takes courage and motivation to bring them in. It is difficult for me alone to get such people involved, so the support from the group will be helpful.

As an individual you have to look back from where you come from. FBA left Sweden from a far distance and came here in order to see young people and run a peace course. I thought to myself "What about us in Liberia? Why can't we do the same to our families and friends and others?" So thinking ahead, I am now thinking about how I can transform my surroundings with the knowledge that I gained, where I can go next, and where I can make a change. It is important to implement what you have been taught, and that the people in the community will benefit from what you have been given.

I want the people reading this to know that we are who we are because of others, and through teamwork and networks we can do better. We had 14 years of civil war and others thought Liberia can't be a peaceful country, but here we are – living in peace. If you stay focused and do what you want to do, you can make a difference.



FATU BOLAY, 19

Bong county, Messengers of Peace

I got involved in peace work in 2015 when I was the president in my school. I discovered that as a leader you experience a lot of stress and settle much conflict. I thought it would be wise to join a peace club to learn more about settling disputes and so I could take the school forward, and that is how I got involved. Now I'm the focal person in my county for MOP, and I coordinate a lot of activities.

One of the valuable things I have learnt is mindful communication. I now know how to be a patient listener. I don't hijack discussions anymore and I don't have pre-conceived assumptions towards people before they talk. You have to listen and respect everybody. If we had mindful communication we wouldn't have wars; it is such a good tool to peacebuilding.

Since I joined CPLP, I have come to realize that even the vulnerable youth on the street are not there because they want to be; they are there for a reason. We don't know their reason and we classify them as criminals, but we don't go and ask them why. That's a presumption. Since I joined CPLP I know that everybody is equal and

I am who I am because of them. We all have an important role to play in society and we should not discriminate. Some of these people just need someone to listen to them, but there is nobody there to listen. After CPLP, I listen to people – even the vulnerable youth, and now I am in a position where I can help them. I now know how to forgive people, I can listen, I am patient and I know how to volunteer.

I want people to know that the issue of peace is everyone's business and nobody wants to see Liberia as a country of conflict. The next generation depends on us, and Liberia as a nation depends on us. Peace is like a flower. If it gets planted, everybody needs to water that flower in order for it to be beautiful. If you don't water it, the flower it will get dry and die. So we constantly need to water the flower. I want to encourage everybody to invest in the youth and to think about the children. If we invest in the children, they will become peaceful youth and the next generation will be strong and peaceful. We need to go down to the roots; children need peace and security.



ISAAC NATHANIELS, 34

Grand Cape Mount county, Young Ambassadors for Peace

I got involved in peace activities after the war when a friend of mine decided to form this organization called Young Ambassadors for Peace. We were already involved in different workshops concerning HIV/AIDS awareness, so automatically when he told me about the organization I agreed to join. This was in 2009. We would organize youth activities; for example, have a sports event where YAP would preach the message of peace.

I also take my own initiative within my profession. We engage with community members who will help the educational system in the community, e.g. school feeding. If there is a conflict between community members, the Parents and Teachers' Association, and the school administration, we organize meetings with all stakeholders to resolve the dispute.

I feel my capacity has been strengthened, especially around how to build peace and manage conflict. A lot of my perceptions have changed since I joined CPLP. Instead of focusing on the negative aspects of the conflicting parties, I have realized we can have dialogue between them. There are other ways to solve conflict. One of

the topics I think was interesting was the issue of mindful communication, which we apply when we try to go deep down beyond what the person is saying to understand the way they are feeling. Since all of the counties were represented in the program it feels very encouraging to know that if each one of us can reach 50 people the message of peace can spread fast.

Within CPLP we can share our experience, disappointments, short-comings, and we have someone who listens and helps us find solutions. CPLP has also connected us with people of importance. The program should continue and I hope that the resource team continue to check up on us after graduation.

I would like the Liberian government to invest more in peace and youth programs. Youth constitutes more than half of the population in Liberia and we are active in every aspect of life, so more attention should be paid to us.



JAMES T. KOLUBAH, 30

Sinoe county, Mano River Union Youth Parliament

Liberia has suffered from civil crises and abuse for years. People in my family were killed and raped in the war, and this is what really made me want to be part of this program and what made me start with volunteering. I saw all of these horrible things happening and I wanted to react to what other people did to my family. But I sat down and thought, “No, I love my country, the best thing I can do is to stand for peace”. Peace is development, as I know it. I really believe in volunteerism, that’s how people can help.

UN resolution 2250 talks about inclusiveness, how can this be done? We have to start on a county level, all over the country. Not everybody knows the importance of peace; they think it’s not their business. But it’s everybody’s business, and if all the people in Liberia know that, that’s how we get a better society. That is the person who I want to be. I want to go to my community and tell them about what I have learnt from CPLP and what I have seen in Liberia and in Sweden, about who I am and what I want to do. With the effort of my community we can keep the peace.

CPLP introduced a new way of thinking to me; I thought that as a peace leader I would have the final say. I have now learned that as a peace leader we have to find the solution together through discussions and dialogue. A leader doesn’t go in and say “this or that should be done”. No, instead they listen and they find a solution together. As a peace leader it is important to get everybody’s view, and to make the people who feel limited and marginalized feel that they are not limited and insecure – that they are somebody! This is important for me and for the youth of Liberia. Mindful communication, respect everybody, listen to everybody’s views, through the means of dialogue we try to find the solution, not just one person can say the truth. I’m proud to stand before my youth friends and explain this way of thinking. I’ve learned good leadership!

A lot of young people resort to demonstrations or misbehaving. I would like the FBA to continue their training of young people in Liberia and help shape their minds; to get peacebuilding in the minds of young people.

I want to start a peace club, which will stand as a role model and enhance knowledge. We already have peace clubs in my county but none of them applies the strategies I’ve learnt through this program. I can give them an idea and together we can build the peace club and make it stronger.

The message I want to give people is that we should live with peace. Even though we have conflict in us every day, we should try to sit in dialogue to settle the dispute among ourselves. Going to the street will not help our country. It will not help our government or our families and community. We should all live with peace, if we live with peace and have peace on our mind, we will love our country, our family and ourselves.



JEFFERSON N. WEAJAR, 29

Lofa county, Mano River Union Youth Parliament

I'm a youth leader working in Lofa county and I'm part of the MRUYP. I really love building peace because peace is at the core of everything we do, it is the nucleus of all activities. Without peace we have war and violence, with peace we have development and a better future. Peace makes us move forward in life. I am very happy and proud being part of CPLP, because with more training and education I can do more within my community, in Liberia and Africa at large.

We do not get paid in our respective organizations, but all the CPLP participants are passionate, eager and want to volunteer. We have now got to put our energy and strength to bring what we learned from the program to the ground.

I appreciate that CPLP gathered people from all the counties and that we, as the participants, have been part of the process. You do not see that kind of inclusive process with our institutions. This has created a sense of togetherness and over a period of time CPLP feels like a family. My main focus right now is how to sustain this program in Liberia. As soon as we start teaching other youth about what we have learnt in CPLP, we are going to get more peace leaders and the message is going to spread. We now have tools

such as dialogue, facilitation and mediation skills that we can use in our communities. We can now create our own initiative and solve problems. With CPLP we have a network and we can help each other! However, we still need the support of FBA to be able to strengthen our work. I also want the institutions in Liberia to see this group formulated by FBA and take key interest in us so we can continue to be empowered and active.

I discovered a lot through this program. I am more confident now and I can talk to people about peace for a whole day. I am passionate and I have built a sense of volunteerism in my community. I am a proud peace leader and an agent of change through peaceful actions. I have discovered that I need to have different approaches while talking to different groups. This is an important discovery since there are many different groups in my community. Young people are my target and I will talk about my experience from CPLP to motivate them. Peacebuilding is not static, its dynamic and something that we need to work with every day.

We are not agents of violence; we are agents of change and peace. My strong recommendation is that we stay connected!



RUTH FATU ARMAH, 32

Margibi county, WANEP/WIPNET's youth wing

I joined WIPNET in 2011 and I am the focal person for them in my county. Through WIPNET I have received training in early warning mechanism, election monitoring, and how to easily report violence in my community. Last year, I volunteered to monitor the election. Sometimes I go to the prisoners' compound and talk to them about peace, and try to encourage them to consider themselves to be of service and to give them hope. I also organize peace clubs in schools and talk to the administrators.

Through the interactive approach within CPLP I have built my capacity and learnt both from the resource team and the other participants. The exercises have been very educational and everybody has been treated equally. I believe that the program has opened up our minds and put us on the right track. We also got to visit Sweden and got the opportunity to interact with many people, with whom we would not have been able to meet if it weren't for the CPLP. Within myself I have discovered that I have courage and that we have connection and unity amongst the

participants and the resource team. I now know that peacebuilding is a process not an event.

Now we want to put what we learnt into practice and implement it in our counties and homes. I want the people in Liberia to enjoy the same sustaining peace as the people in Sweden enjoy. I believe that Liberia can become even better than Sweden.

In the future I think it might be challenging to get people to listen to us since we are young, as well as to convince people to get into volunteerism, especially as people who know we went to Sweden assume we have money. We need more volunteers to strengthen our peace work but it is difficult since people want to get paid. We also need the continued support from the CPLP resource team. I would like the people who have trained us to rally around us, and continue to listen to us. I want them to identify with us and put their hands around us so that we can continue to build peace.



SARAFINA BADIO, 18

Grand Bassa county, WANEP/WIPNET's youth wing

I joined WIPNET because I wanted to be a peacebuilder, and I wanted to help my friends who are not able to stay in school because of teen pregnancies. I got engaged because I was really frustrated to see that the men do not respect the women, some even hit women. I also think it is important to send children to school, as well as young mothers to stay in school. So I joined the organization to be able to talk about the importance of peace and to tell the women about how they can provide for, and take care of, themselves. Women are important to society!

When I go back to my community, people will know that I have participated in the FBA program. It is great to get recognition from my community but this is also a challenge. Peacebuilders still get abused all the time. When we go in some communities and talk about peace some people will aggressively question why we are there. Some of them can really bring out fear in me. Time that I could have spent at home I use to work for peace and then they slap you in the face. You get beaten and nobody wants to listen to you, so as a peace leader you have to be strong.

In CPLP I learned that as a peacebuilder you have to serve as an example to others. As a peace leader in your community, you have to seek a solution outside of yourself; you don't say "Oh, I'm a peace leader, I know everything". When someone is having conflict, you will not always know how that conflict started, so you have to ask questions: "who are they, what are they doing, and why?" You can't tell anybody that they are wrong and you are right.

Through CPLP I discovered trust within myself. I think I'm fit to be a peace leader right now and I know how to talk and move in the community, and how to put myself into other people's situations. A recommendation to CPLP is also to talk about disadvantaged girls on the street. They have no one to care for them, no food, and no one to give them advice. They are there because of frustration, not because they want to be there. They have had big problems in their lives; we need to plan and go to all the counties and ask them why they are on the street.

The plans I have for the future are to go back to Buchanan and do more about teen pregnancies and keep young mothers in school. I want to bring young people together and talk to them about why peace is important; and about what we need to do in our county to make Liberia peaceful!



SAYENNOH C. HINSON, 29

River Gee county, Young Ambassadors for Peace

I started working in a peace club and I used to have conversations about peacebuilding with my friends. A friend from YAP noticed me and thought that I was good at talking with people about peace, so he recommended I should join the organization. I joined and that's where the peace work started for me – in the rural schools and in the community.

My way of living has changed because of CPLP and I will make sure that we go forward. If I talk to one or two people and I can change their attitude; that's how we go forward. For example, I started to engage with people who were not willing to complete school after they had kids. So I had to encourage them and say that even if you have two or three kids you can still go back to school. You have to educate yourself if you want to be someone in the future. Without education you will not reach that far. So I talked to one of my friends with kids about this, and now she has joined a vocational school and by 2020 she will graduate.

The main thing I discovered in the program is that you have to be truthful to yourself and your community. This means that you have to be an honest person in every aspect of your life. If people recognize you as a dishonest person, how will they believe that you are truthful and have honest intentions when you say you are a peace leader? You cannot be a peace leader and make promises that you cannot keep. You cannot go into a community and say that you will do a lot of things and then never follow through – that's not being truthful. If you say it, live by it.

I want people to know that the program FBA established with the participants in Liberia went well. We, the CPLP participants, will make sure to make the resource team proud and show them how serious we are about peace in Liberia, and that the effort they made will not be in vain. They will be proud to see what we will accomplish.



TERRY PENNUE, 28

Grand Gedeh county, WANEP/WIPNET's youth wing

I started volunteering for WIPNET after I got a call from them where they asked me to join. They said “The way you move around in the community and the way you can unite your friends, even with erosions on the roads, is exactly what we are looking for”. Myself and some friends started volunteering for WIPNET, going around the community, raising awareness, spreading the message of peace and how to maintain relationships.

The ideas and methodology put into place to train us as young Liberians from our counties will impact our lives. Before CPLP we performed peace activities from our own understanding, and a lot of people did not like what we did. But through this program I've come to understand how peace works, how to maintain relationships and other aspects of conflict prevention.

The method and approach of CPLP was genuine and the mentoring has been very good. I also liked the fact that there were some playful elements included in the exercises. The resource team treated everybody equally and with respect. It was not a teacher–student situation or a boss–

employee situation. Instead we were like brothers and sisters and that contributed to make us feel seen and heard.

The main achievement from CPLP is all the knowledge we have acquired, and that we earned recognition from people in our community. When we go back to our home communities, people will listen to us and we can work with the youth. Young people are often seen as troublemakers but now we can sit down and talk with them about peace and how we can move from one level to another to become better people in our society. I discovered the importance of networking and how we can get better at networking processes. This is important since when we get back to our communities we are going to have peace activities and meet a lot of people. Another important aspect I discovered within myself is my sense of passion and commitment. I live in Grand Gedeh and I spent five days on the muddy roads (one way) to get to Monrovia to be able to participate in the modules, which is an example of my commitment towards this.



ALETHA BLAMO + (1992-2018)

Our paths crossed with Aletha's in 2017, when she was selected as one of the Liberian participants in our Conflict Prevention Leadership Program. We then had the pleasure of spending time with Aletha at several occasions during 2018, both in Liberia and in Sweden, where she represented Mano River Union Youth Parliament in Montserrado county.

Aletha was a warm and passionate human being with an amazing spirit and strength. She had strong visions as well as the will and capacity to achieve them. She was also a very thoughtful and inspirational woman who touched many lives and she will be sorely missed by many.

What did we achieve?

FBA's work with CPLP is a long-term engagement aiming to strengthen the capacity of the participants, their organizations, and enhance collaboration between them as part of the wider objective to prevent violent conflict and contribute to inclusive peace in Liberia. Some months after the closing ceremony of the first CPLP, it is too early to elaborate on its long-term impact. However, there are a number of concrete results that can already be identified.

The behaviour change among the participants is an obvious one. To see how their self-confidence has grown and how, with new knowledge and skills, they are designing, planning and implementing peacebuilding activities is truly inspiring. And they do not work alone. Apart from the alumni network, which they started themselves, an informal network is growing, connecting young peacebuilders from all parts of the country. Within it, a culture of encouragement and support has grown.

A number of the participants are increasingly involved in conflict prevention or resolution initiatives. One of them in family disputes, another was called to support the local police in managing a conflict, and yet another has been taking initiatives to support the peaceful management of a community conflict. Several of the participants have, since they joined CPLP, started new or more peace clubs, or expanded already existing activities. In November 2018, the participants joined together and initiated a peacebuilding activity aimed for hard-to-reach youth in Kakata.

Another concrete and quite recent result is that key decision makers in Liberia acknowledge CPLP as an important entity within the peacebuilding architecture, integrating them in a new large-scale program, and increasingly recognize youth as a positive force for peace. The gap has decreased between our young participants and government officials and other key stakeholders within peace and security in Liberia.

When finalizing this report, we are just about to embark on our second CPLP journey; forming a new group with 15 young individuals, composing the resource team and planning for the modules and mentoring phases ahead of us. At the same time, FBA is planning similar initiatives in other parts of the world. With inspiration from the CPLP experience, we are currently looking into developing a youth peacebuilding program in for example Iraq. Of course, we take into account the key lessons from CPLP: that inclusivity costs but definitely pays off, and the importance of adapting to the specific context and different needs of the participants. The most strategic program is guided by the ability to adapt.

Annexes

1. LETTER OF APPRECIATION TO THE FBA FROM THE CPLP PARTICIPANTS

“We like to express our heartfelt thanks to the FBA family for the knowledge and relationship built during the period of the Conflict Prevention and Leadership Program (CPLP) training cycle both in Liberia and Sweden. It was indeed a rewarding and impactful experience for participating in the program.

The certification of youth peace leaders at the climax of this significant and impactful conflict prevention and leadership training program serves as a motivation for the beginning of our journey in peacebuilding in Liberia. As we move in our respective counties with the knowledge and skills in mindful communication and facilitation, concepts and practice of dialogue and mediation, values-based peace leadership development and strategic peacebuilding; we the network members representing the 15 counties of Liberia, trained by FBA through the Swedish government, are committed in our shared views and values of volunteering to contribute toward peacebuilding initiatives in our respective communities.

Words cannot articulate our feelings of enthusiasm and gratitude to the FBA family and the resource team for their tireless efforts in making many disciples of peace. We have derived so much passion for this professional field, and have pledged our commitment to take responsibility as peace leaders in our various youth institutions and communities.

It is a real privilege and opportunity knowing and interacting with you throughout the CPLP training program. We are deeply touched with high level of love and concern shown to the members of this network over the period of time. It is out of this experience that we are determined to continue to hold together. The need for maintaining a network amongst ourselves cannot be underestimated, as we are mobilized for sustaining this program.

We are indeed enthusiastic about your commitment and ongoing involvement into this venture, along with us. We will continue to take leadership role while counting on the unwavering support from FBA. We will continue to provide updates on this CPLP movement FBA has initiated in Liberia.”

/The participants of the CPLP 2018

2. KEY CONCEPTS: DIALOGUE, MEDIATION AND PEACE LEADERSHIP

Conflict exists in all countries and at every level of society. In FBA’s view, conflict in itself is not necessarily negative, but rather an expression of differences of interest and usually involves the struggle for justice, equal treatment and development. However, when a conflict is not handled by peaceful means, when it escalates and people resort to violence, the negative impacts can be enormous.

A common and often overlooked reason for escalation and violence is the lack of mechanisms and institutions to address conflict in a constructive and non-violent manner. Conflict prevention and resolution work is undertaken in order to avoid the occurrence of violence and its escalation and recurrence.

Dialogue and mediation are important processes in such work. A dialogue is an open-ended interaction that entails listening, understanding, and the sharing of perspectives. The overarching aim is to build trust and strong relations between people and groups, and jointly explore how to constructively deal with challenges in society.

A mediation process is usually more formalized, with a third-party providing a framework for negotiations aimed at reaching a concrete settlement of a conflict issue, such as a peace agreement. Mediation processes are often initiated when a conflict risks turning violent and positions are entrenched.

FBA offers tailor-made training programs in dialogue and mediation. For the past twelve years, FBA has trained and supported hundreds of UN personnel, as well as national actors in conflict-affected countries, who are making important contributions for peace.

In addition, “peace leadership” was introduced as a central concept and focus area of CPLP. During this program, the understanding of peace leadership was the ability and skill to take initiative, and lead, with others, to create a more peaceful society in Liberia. All through CPLP, guiding values of peace leadership, such as integrity, self-reflection, inspiration, authenticity, adaption to the local context, empathy and creativity, were discussed, with the aim of empowering the participants to become more confident and inspired peace leaders.

The Youth, Peace and Security Agenda is a priority for FBA. It has emerged globally as a counter reaction to young people being systematically excluded from social and peacebuilding processes. In many conflict-affected countries, young men are seen as violent practitioners and young women as victims. Social norms and structures linked to age affect the access of young men and young women to power, influence and rights. The stereotypical understanding of young people as a security issue, rather than a resource in peacebuilding, has to a large extent excluded young people from peace, reconciliation and reconstruction processes. With the adoption of resolution 2250 and follow-up resolution 2419, the UN Security Council recognized young adults (18-29 years according to the UN definition) as important and positive peace actors. The purpose of the resolutions is to prepare space for youth as positive actors in issues of peace building and conflict management by taking on their commitment and driving force for change.

Meaningful youth participation and influence in peace and reconciliation processes is a matter of rights, legitimacy and efficiency. Protecting the rights of young men and women, utilizing their capabilities, and allowing their meaningful participation in society at large are therefore key measures to strengthen societal resistance to conflict, ensure human security and achieve sustainable peace.

FBA is involved in a number of initiatives together with partners, for instance by providing support to the Swedish civil society, contributing to methodology development, implementing activities for youth and with a youth perspective, as well as promoting research in the field. CPLP is considered to be one example of an FBA program which relates to and support the youth, peace and security agenda.

3. BIOGRAPHIES OF RESOURCE TEAM

Chris Spies, South Africa

Chris works as an independent conflict transformation and dialogue practitioner in his own practice, Dynamic Stability, and is the one of the founding directors of Unyoke Foundation, focusing on growing and accompanying the next generation peacebuilders across the world and particularly in Africa. Chris is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and facilitator of the FBA courses in dialogue and mediation. In South Africa, Chris is an activist for justice with peace and a facilitator of intergenerational dialogues. He served as the Peace and Development Advisor for the UNDP Social Cohesion Program in Guyana 2003-2006.

Dominique Górska (FBA), Sweden

Dominique joined FBA in 2013 where she has been working with policy, research and development within the area of rule of law in Liberia, Georgia, Kosovo and Ukraine. She has been engaged in developing analytical tools aimed at enhancing the implementation of international principles and standards on fair trial in administrative justice and local self-governance. Dominique started working with rule of law related projects in Liberia in 2013. She has previous experience from the International Criminal Court, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, UNICEF Sweden, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (UN) and civil society organizations.

Karin Hugsén (FBA), Sweden

Karin joined FBA in 2018 and works as a dialogue and peace mediation desk officer, mainly focusing on FBA's partnership with UN. Previously, she worked at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, most recently at the Department for conflict and humanitarian affairs. At the Ministry for Foreign affairs, Karin was also deeply involved with Sweden's work with Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals. Prior to that, Karin worked as a human rights desk officer at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Klara Grenhagen (FBA), Sweden

Klara works as a dialogue and mediation officer at FBA. Previously, she worked at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, within the peace mediation support unit. The last 12 years, Klara has worked with development cooperation in different post-conflict countries and in Sweden, both within non-governmental organizations and private sector. She has extensive experience in working with strategic communication in development cooperation, not least from her position as Head of the Swedish Development Forum. Klara has worked

several years in Angola and Brazil, speaks Portuguese and has a special interest in Lusophone Africa.

Maja Jakobsson (FBA), Sweden

Maja works as dialogue and peace mediation specialist at FBA. For the last two years she has focused her work on conflict prevention initiatives in Liberia. Maja has been responsible for FBA's International Dialogue and Mediation Program, targeting senior female leaders from conflict-affected countries. Her previous experience is mainly from civil society organizations in Sweden and abroad, working with peace and youth issues. Maja spent six years as an international coordinator for a Swedish youth and peace organization and has volunteer experience from different peacebuilding organizations in Sweden, Uganda, France and Guatemala.

Nomfundo Walaza, South Africa

Nomfundo is a clinical psychologist who has worked in the human rights field for the last two decades. She focuses on dialogue, mediation, conflict transformation and innovative ways to nurture young and upcoming leaders. Nomfundo assists academic institutions in engaging in difficult conversations around issues of transformation and decolonization. She is one of the founding directors of the Unyoke Foundation and has previously served as CEO of the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre and as Executive Director of the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture in Cape Town, focusing on empowering and healing victims of torture, trauma and violence.

William (Bill) Saa, Liberia

William is a peace practitioner, specializing in prevention, resolution and transformation of conflict since more than 20 years. Through the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), he has contributed significantly to the creation and strengthening of peacebuilding networks in West Africa. William places much value on human relationships and community involvement and has worked with government officials, security forces, former combatants, children associated with armed groups and other war affected populations. During Liberia's brutal civil war, William contributed extensively in the field of trauma healing, social reconciliation, community mediation and conflict transformation in several Liberian communities and in neighbouring countries.

4. UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2250, ADOPTED 2015

"The Security Council,

"Recalling its resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015) on Women, Peace and Security and all relevant statements of its President, its resolutions on Countering Terrorism 2178 (2014) and 2195 (2014) and the Statement of its President S/PRST/2015/11, and the Statements of its President on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding S/PRST/2012/29 and S/PRST/2015/2,

"Recalling its resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1894 (2009) on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict,

"Bearing in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the primary responsibility of the Security Council under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security,

“Noting that the term youth is defined in the context of this resolution as persons of the age of 18-29 years old, and further noting the variations of definition of the term that may exist on the national and international levels, including the definition of youth in the General Assembly resolutions A/RES/50/81 and A/RES/56/117,
“Recognizing that today’s generation of youth is the largest the world has ever known and that young people often form the majority of the population of countries affected by armed conflict,
“Expressing concern that among civilians, youth account for many of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and that the disruption of youth’s access to education and economic opportunities has a dramatic impact on durable peace and reconciliation,
“Recognizing the important and positive contribution of youth in efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security,
“Affirming the important role youth can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts,
“Recognizing that youth should actively be engaged in shaping lasting peace and contributing to justice and reconciliation, and that a large youth population presents a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity if inclusive policies are in place,
“Recognizing that the rise of radicalization to violence and violent extremism, especially amongst youth, threatens stability and development, and can often derail peacebuilding efforts and foment conflict, *and stressing* the importance of addressing conditions and factors leading to the rise of radicalization to violence and violent extremism amongst youth, which can be conducive to terrorism,
“Expressing concern over the increased use, in a globalized society, by terrorists and their supporters of new information and communication technologies, in particular the Internet, for the purposes of recruitment and incitement of youth to commit terrorist acts, as well as for the financing, planning and preparation of their activities, and underlining the need for Member States to act cooperatively to prevent terrorists from exploiting technology, communications and resources to incite support for terrorist acts, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and in compliance with other obligations under international law,
“Noting the important role youth can play further as positive role models in preventing and countering violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, and fuels conflict, inhibits socioeconomic development and fosters regional and international insecurity,
“Noting that the Secretary-General is finalizing a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to integrate youth’s participation, leadership and empowerment as core to the United Nations strategy and responses,
“Noting the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Guiding Principles on Young People’s Participation in Peacebuilding, the August 2015 Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, the Amman Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security, the September 2015 Global Youth Summit against Violent Extremism and the Action Agenda to Prevent Violent Extremism and Promote Peace, and acknowledging their role in creating a foundation that promotes young people’s inclusive participation and positive contribution to building peace in conflict and post-conflict situations,
“Acknowledging the on-going work of national governments and regional and international organisations to engage youth in building and maintaining peace,
“Encouraging Member States to consider developing a UN common approach to inclusive development as a key for preventing conflict and enabling long-term stability and sustainable peace, and highlighting in this regard the importance of identifying and addressing social, economic, political, cultural and religious exclusion, intolerance, as well as violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, as drivers of conflict,
“Recognizing that the protection of youth during conflict and post-conflict and their participation in peace processes can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security, and being convinced that the protection of civilians, including youth, in armed conflict should be an important aspect of any comprehensive strategy to resolve conflict and build peace,
“Noting relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,

Participation

- “1. *Urges* Member States to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels in local, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including institutions and mechanisms to counter violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, and, as appropriate, to consider establishing integrated mechanisms for meaningful participation of youth in peace processes and dispute-resolution;
- “2. *Calls on* all relevant actors, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to take into account, as appropriate, the participation and views of youth, recognising that their marginalisation is detrimental to building sustainable peace in all societies, including, inter alia, such specific aspects as:

- “(a) The needs of youth during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction;
- “(b) Measures that support local youth peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve youth in the implementation mechanisms of peace agreements;
- “(c) Measures to empower youth in peacebuilding and conflict resolution;
- “3. *Stresses* the importance of Security Council missions taking into account youth-related considerations including, as appropriate, through consultation with local and international youth groups;

Protection

- “4. *Calls upon* all parties to armed conflict to comply strictly with the obligations applicable to them under international law relevant to the protection of civilians, including those who are youth, including the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977;
- “5. *Further calls upon* states to comply with the obligations applicable to them under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- “6. *Further calls upon* Member States to comply with their respective obligations to end impunity and further calls on them to investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against civilians, including youth, noting that the fight against impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern has been strengthened through the work on and prosecution of these crimes by the International Criminal Court, ad hoc and mixed tribunals and specialized chambers in national tribunals;
- “7. *Calls on* all parties to armed conflict to take the necessary measures to protect civilians, including those who are youth, from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence;
- “8. *Reaffirms* that states must respect and ensure the human rights of all individuals, including youth, within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction as provided for by relevant international law and reaffirms that each state bears the primary responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity;
- “9. *Urges* Member States to consider specific measures, in conformity with international law, that ensure, during armed conflict and post conflict, the protection of civilians, including youth;

Prevention

- “10. *Urges* Member States to facilitate an inclusive and enabling environment in which youth actors, including youth from different backgrounds, are recognised and provided with adequate support to implement violence prevention activities and support social cohesion;
- “11. *Stresses* the importance of creating policies for youth that would positively contribute to peacebuilding efforts, including social and economic development, supporting projects designed to grow local economies, and provide youth employment opportunities and vocational training, fostering their education, and promoting youth entrepreneurship and constructive political engagement;
- “12. *Urges* Member States to support, as appropriate, quality education for peace that equips youth with the ability to engage constructively in civic structures and inclusive political processes;
- “13. *Calls on* all relevant actors to consider instituting mechanisms to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural and interreligious dialogue that involve youth and discourage their participation in acts of violence, terrorism, xenophobia, and all forms of discrimination;

Partnerships

- “14. *Urges* Member States to increase, as appropriate, their political, financial, technical and logistical support, that take account of the needs and participation of youth in peace efforts, in conflict and post-conflict situations, including those undertaken by relevant entities, funds and programmes, inter alia, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, United Nations Peacebuilding fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, UN-Women, and by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant bodies, and actors at regional and international levels;
- “15. *Stresses* the vital role the Peacebuilding Commission in addressing the conditions and factors leading to the rise of radicalization to violence and violent extremism among youth, which can be conducive to terrorism, by including in its advice and recommendations for peace building strategies ways to engage youth meaningfully during and in the aftermath of armed conflict;

“16. *Encourages* Member States to engage relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter the violent extremist narrative that can incite terrorist acts, address the conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, including by empowering youth, families, women, religious, cultural and education leaders, and all other concerned groups of civil society and adopt tailored approaches to countering recruitment to this kind of violent extremism and promoting social inclusion and cohesion;

Disengagement & reintegration

“17. *Encourages* all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the needs of youth affected by armed conflict, including, inter alia, such specific aspects as:

“(a) evidence-based and gender-sensitive youth employment opportunities, inclusive labour policies, national youth employment action plans in partnership with the private sector, developed in partnership with youth and recognising the interrelated role of education, employment and training in preventing the marginalisation of youth;

“(b) investment in building young persons’ capabilities and skills to meet labour demands through relevant education opportunities designed in a manner which promotes a culture of peace;

“(c) support for youth-led and peacebuilding organisations as partners in youth employment and entrepreneurship programs;

“18. *Notes* its readiness, whenever measures are adopted under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, to consider their potential impact on the population, including youth;

Next steps

“19. *Invites* relevant entities of the United Nations, Rapporteurs and Special Envoys and Representatives of the Secretary-General, including the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth and the Special Envoy for Youth Refugees, to improve the coordination and interaction regarding the needs of youth during armed conflicts and post-conflict situations;

“20. *Requests* the Secretary-General to carry out a progress study on the youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional and international levels, and further requests the Secretary-General to make the results of this study available to the Security Council and all Member States of the United Nations;

“21. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to include in his reports in the context of situations that are on the agenda of the Council the measures taken in the implementation of this resolution, including information on youth in situations of armed conflict and the existence of measures relating to the prevention, partnerships, participation, protection, disengagement and reintegration of youth under this resolution;

“22. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.”

5. UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2419, ADOPTED 2018

“*The Security Council,*

“*Reaffirming* its commitment to the full implementation of resolution 2250 (2015),

“*Recalling* its resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015) on Women, Peace and Security and all relevant statements of its President,

“*Recalling* also its resolutions on Countering Terrorism including 2178 (2014), 2195 (2014), 2354 (2017), 2395 (2017) and 2396 (2017) and the statement of its President S/PRST/2015/11,

“*Recalling* further its resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1894 (2009) on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict,

“*Recalling* its resolutions 1645 (2005), 2282 (2016) and 2413 (2018) on the peacebuilding architecture and the statements of its President on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding S/PRST/2012/29 and S/PRST/2015/2,

“*Noting* that the term youth is defined in the context of this resolution as persons of the age of 18-29 years old, and further noting the variations of definition of the term that may exist on the national and international levels, including the definition of youth in the General Assembly resolutions 50/81 and 56/117,

“*Bearing in mind* the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the primary responsibility of the Security Council under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security,

“*Reaffirming* the importance of promoting the United Nations ability to deliver on its founding determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and putting emphasis on preventive diplomacy, mediation and good offices, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and sustaining peace,

“*Reaffirming* also the important and positive contribution youth can make to the efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

“*Reaffirming* further the important role youth can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts,

“*Reaffirming* the importance of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding, whereby the responsibility for sustaining peace is broadly shared by the Government and all other national stakeholders,

“*Reaffirming* also the primary responsibility of national Governments and authorities in identifying, driving and directing priorities, strategies and activities for peacebuilding and sustaining peace and emphasizes that inclusivity, including by ensuring full and effective participation of youth without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status is key to advancing national peacebuilding processes and objectives in order to ensure that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account,

“*Recognizing* the importance of civil society, including community-based civil society, youth, the private sector, academia, think tanks, media, women, and cultural, educational and religious leaders in increasing awareness about the threats of terrorism and more effectively tackling them,

“*Emphasizing* the importance of a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, particularly through the prevention of conflict and addressing its root causes at all stages of conflict,

“*Recognizing* the important contribution of an integrated approach in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

“*Expressing concern* over the increased use, in a globalized society, by terrorists and their supporters of new information and communications technologies, in particular the Internet, for the purposes of recruitment and incitement of youth to commit terrorist acts, as well as for the financing, planning and preparation of their activities, and underlining the need for Member States to act cooperatively to prevent terrorists from exploiting technology, communications and resources to incite support for terrorist acts, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and in compliance with other obligations under international law,

“*Recognizing* the challenges faced by youth which put them at particular risk, including gender inequalities that perpetuate all forms of discrimination and violence, and persistent inequalities that put young women at particular risk, and therefore reaffirming the commitment to the empowerment of women and gender equality,

“*Recognizing* also the growing contribution of sport and culture to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of youth and women, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives,

“*Reaffirming* the right to education and its contribution to the achievement of peace and security and further recognizing that investment in universal, and inclusive education and training is an important policy investment that States can make to ensure the immediate and long-term development of youth, and reiterating that access to inclusive, equitable and quality formal and non-formal education are important factors that enable youth to acquire the relevant skills and to build their capacities,

“1. *Notes* the independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, ‘The missing peace’ presented by the independent lead author and of the Advisory Group of Experts;

“2. *Calls* on all relevant actors to consider ways to increase the inclusive representation of youth for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to take into account the meaningful participation and views of youth, recognizing that their marginalization is detrimental to building sustainable peace and countering violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism;

“3. *Recognizes* the role youth can play in conflict prevention and resolution;

“4. *Reiterates* the importance of Security Council missions taking into account youth-related considerations including, as appropriate, through consultation with local and international youth groups;

“5. *Calls upon* all parties to armed conflict to comply strictly with the obligations applicable to them under international law relevant to the protection of civilians, including youth, including the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and additional protocols thereto of 1977 and urges Member States to consider specific measures, in conformity with international law, that ensure, during armed conflict and post-conflict, the protection of civilians, including youth;

“6. *Also calls upon* Member States to comply with their respective obligations to end impunity and further calls on them to investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against civilians, including youth;

“7. *Reaffirms* that States must respect, promote and protect the human rights of all individuals, including youth, within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction as provided for by relevant international law and reaffirms that each State bears the primary responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity;

“8. *Urges* Member States to protect youth from violence in armed conflict, and urges all parties to eliminate all forms of sexual and gender-based violence as well as human trafficking;

“9. *Recognizes* the role of youth in promoting a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural and interreligious

dialogue that aims at discouraging their participation in acts of violence, terrorism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination and reiterates that efforts to counter terrorist narratives can benefit through engagement with a wide range of actors, including youth and youth-led civil society;

“10. *Recognizes* that youth and youth-led civil society can also play an important role in efforts to peacebuilding and sustaining peace;

“11. *Reaffirming* States’ obligation to respect, promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals, including youth, and ensure equal access to justice and preserve the integrity of rule of law institutions; and foster an enabling and safe environment for youth working on peace and security;

“12. *Calls upon* Member States to protect educational institutions as spaces free from all forms of violence, and to ensure that they are accessible to all youth, including marginalized youth, and take steps to address young women’s equal enjoyment of their right to education;

“13. *Stresses* the importance of creating policies for youth that would positively contribute to peacebuilding efforts, including social and economic development, supporting projects designed to grow local economies, and provide youth employment opportunities and vocational training, fostering their education, and promoting youth entrepreneurship and constructive political engagement;

“14. *Urges* Member States to consider, as appropriate, how their political, financial, technical and logistical support in conflict and post-conflict situations takes into account the needs and participation of youth in peace efforts;

“15. *Recommends* the Peacebuilding Commission to include in its discussions and advice, ways to engage youth meaningfully in national efforts to build and sustain peace;

“16. *Urges* the Secretary-General and his Special Envoys to take into account the views of youth in relevant discussions pertinent to the maintenance of peace and security, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and to facilitate the equal and full participation of youth at decision-making levels, paying particular attention to the inclusion of young women;

“17. *Also urges* appropriate regional and subregional bodies in particular to consider developing and implementing policies and programs for youth and to facilitate their constructive engagement;

“18. *Expresses* its intention, where appropriate, to invite civil society including youth-led organizations to brief the Council in country-specific considerations and relevant thematic areas;

“19. *Encourages* relevant entities of the United Nations, Rapporteurs and Special Envoys and Representatives of the Secretary-General, including the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, to improve their coordination and interaction regarding the needs of youth during armed conflicts and post-conflict situations;

“20. *Requests* the Secretary-General, where appropriate, to consider including in his reporting to the Security Council information on the progress made towards participation of youth in peace processes, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and interlinked programmes such as community violence reduction;

“21. *Recommends* that the Secretary-General consider internal mechanisms to broaden the participation of youth within the work of the United Nations;

“22. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit, no later than May 2020, a report to the Council on the implementation of this resolution and of resolution 2250 (2015);

“23. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.”

