

# International cooperation in crisis zones: Multiple identities and shared commitment



## Building the Peace

By the Coordination and Assistance Team  
of the Civil Peace Services in the countries of the Great Lakes  
in Africa (CPS-Great Lakes/EED)

Flaubert Djateng • Christiane Kayser • Marie José Mavinga

***The vision of the Partners of Civil Peace Services (CPS) –  
Mano River Region / Church Development Service,  
an Association of the Protestant Churches of Germany (EED)***

- *A sub-region characterized by a culture of peace, equality, justice, fair play and responsible citizens;*
- *A transparent and accountable governance system at all levels, capable of providing services for the citizens;*
- *Effective and efficient control of the economy and other state resources, utilized for the good of all;*
- *A sub-region free of ethnic and religious bigotry and where everyone enjoys equal rights, opportunities and protection;*
- *Providing the necessary enabling environment through advocacy and other peaceful means, for women and youth to fully realize their potentials;*
- *A vibrant and proactive Mano River Union (MRU) functioning in harmony with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to facilitate the unimpeded movement of people, goods and services within the region;*
- *Effective networking and cooperation among CPS Partner Organisations within the Mano River Region.*

# Building the Peace

**EED** (Evangelical Development Service, Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst, Service des Eglises Evangéliques en Allemagne pour la Coopération Economique)

**Financed by BMZ** (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Bundeministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit, Ministère Allemand pour la Coopération Economique)

# **International cooperation in crisis zones: Multiple identities and shared commitment**

**By the Coordination and Assistance Team of the Civil Peace  
Services in the countries of the Great Lakes in Africa  
(CPS-Great Lakes / EED)**

**By: Flaubert Djabateng · Christiane Kayser · Marie José Mavinga**



**EED** (Church Development Service, an Association  
of the Protestant Churches of Germany)

**Financed by BMZ** (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation  
and Development, Bundeministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit,  
Ministère Allemand pour la Coopération Economique)



**Civil Peace Services (CPS; Ziviler Friedendienst or ZFD)**

All rights reserved in all countries

First edition (French), March 2007

English translation: Joan Baxter

Copyright © 2008 by CPS-Great Lakes/EED, Kinshasa, Bafoussam, Berlin

Photo copyrights: Flaubert Djateng, EED, Joachim Gerhardt, Christiane Kayser,

Katharina Schilling, Stefan Rostock, Marlies Roth

Production and design: Eberhard Delius, Berlin

Layout: Reih's Satzstudio, Köln

Printing: Format Druck, Berlin

Printed in Germany

**Contact:**

**Flaubert Djateng: [fdjateng9@gmail.com](mailto:fdjateng9@gmail.com);**

**[www.scpgrandslacs.org](http://www.scpgrandslacs.org)**

## Contents

1. <i>Introduction</i> . . . . .	7
2. <i>Identities and governance: the challenges of peace-building work</i> . . . . .	9
3. <i>Identity relations among Africans</i> . . . . .	15
4. <i>Identities and cultures</i> . . . . .	18
5. <i>Integrating professional support personnel into the partner structures</i> . . . . .	29
6. <i>Intercultural collaboration in Africa: for a collection of stories</i> . . . . .	32
7. <i>Local structures in crisis zones</i> . . . . .	33
8. <i>Participants in the Civil Peace Services (CPS)</i> . . . . .	39
9. <i>The challenges of collaboration</i> . . . . .	44
10. <i>Collaborative learning</i> . . . . .	54
11. <i>Emergence of a peace-promoting culture for a better future</i> . . . . .	71
ANNEX	
<i>Africa as the world views it: Binyavanga Wainaina:</i>	
<i>How to write about Africa</i> . . . . .	76



# 1. Introduction

The Civil Peace Services engage participants from numerous cultures to work together in peace-building, whether to prevent conflict, transform it or stabilize the situation to bring lasting peace. This multiculturalism is perceived as an opportunity in the sense that it permits participants to learn with and from each other, contributing experiences and methods that have been effective elsewhere. The professional support persons from the Civil Peace Services bring their own contributions to transform and stabilize conflicts to build sustainable peace. This learning process is always reciprocal. Nevertheless, reality has shown that it is this same multiculturalism that is often ignored or viewed as an obstacle in the peace-building process. It can also be reduced to a mere clash between two cultures; that of the people sent from outside and that of the people from the host country. Without dwelling on it too much, we also believe that in Africa this can involve an implicit collision between the cultures of “Black” and “White”. Without saying it out loud because such things are taboo, we reduce the “other” in our perception to an identity that is almost a caricature. Our prejudices can subconsciously shape our behaviour and that of others.

And yet, the reality in this era of globalization is far more complex:

- In each person there are multiple identities at play, identities that are defined not only by their geographical origins or skin colour. Around the world, there are numerous forms of discrimination associated with this or that identity.
- In many African countries, the identities that people perceive and/or experience become an important factor in acute crises; in the context of lost values and identities each group claims to be “native” and designates the other as “a foreigner”, “an immigrant”. Gulfs develop between the so-called original inhabitants and the non-original ones, which constitute the fault lines that are opening in a growing number of countries.



- The professional support persons engaged to work in peace-building by CPS are of diverse origins and their identities cannot be reduced to clichés about “the expatriate” or “the African from the West”, even if sometimes their own perception and that of the others locks them into that.

In this booklet, we put forward factors that affect and examples that illustrate our work in order to:

- Recognize and value the identities of everyone
- Reveal and confront stereotypes and prejudices that influence us
- Develop on the basis of our diverse cultures and identities the elements of a common culture to promote peace and a better future

This complexity and the diverse reactions that result from it are at the heart of the relations between people working in a local organization that receives professional support personnel from outside. The quality of the collaboration that ensues affects the performance of the organization in its peace-building work.

Your experiences and opinions are of interest to us. Let the debate begin!

*The Coordination and Assistance Team of  
CPS/EED in the Great Lakes Region.*

*Flaubert Djateng  
Christiane Kayser  
Marie José Mavinga*

## 2. Identities and governance: the challenges of peace-building work

The strategic paper of the Civil Peace Services in the Democratic Republic of Congo approved by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) stipulates:

*“To advance peace in the DRC and in the Great Lakes Region it is necessary to **reinforce in a sustainable way the strength of civil institutions**, both state and non-state, at the local, regional and national levels. This is **work that will require both time and stamina and that must be rooted at the local level**. It is a necessary condition for putting into practice initiatives for non-violent management of conflicts and for seizing opportunities for sustainable peace . . .*

*The Congolese people have over a long period shown their ingenuity and their capacity to survive in impossible situations. But the Achilles heel here is the cultural and ethnic diversity, which is used again and again by different politicians to divide and weaken the populations. These cultural and ethnic divisions now have their roots not only in the east of the country but also in other regions, such as Katanga, Kasai and the Lower Congo. Any time that a group or an individual criticizes a politician or a businessman, their criticism is construed as being ethnically based, or blamed on geopolitics. Everything is perceived through an ethnic lens; the local people against the “non-locals”, north against south, east against west, the Congolese against the so-called “foreigners”, etc. and vice versa. This tendency has been there a long time, but it has been exaggerated in recent years. With poverty growing among the majority of the population, this too becomes a serious obstacle to sustainable peace that is still there even after successful elections. It is therefore particularly important to support and strengthen the network of civil society groups that see themselves as a constructive counter-force and which struggle against the forces that fragment of the society.”*

Our intercultural work should not only rise to the challenge of overcoming the cleavage between the West and Africa, but also to the challenge of the cultural differences within Africa in the globalized world of today.

Strengthening local and national structures, both state and non-state, is right at the heart of our work.

It is important to note here at the outset that identity conflicts in Africa are closely linked to systems of governance. Ethnic identity as such does not constitute a problem, at least no more than it does in Europe where diversity and prejudices between, for example, the Belgians and the French, Germans and French, or British and mainland Europe, do not constitute major obstacles to the development of the European Union. The conflicts between the Walloons and Flemish in Belgium, on the other hand, have a political and economic dimension that results in serious problems.

It is clearly important in Africa as in Europe to be able to recognize and value one's communal identity, and even more so in Africa where this identity can offer the only form of security for the individual. It is only by acknowledging and reinforcing the practice of governance at all levels that good citizenship for the future can emerge that will permit stability and entry into modernity. In our intercultural work we should also avoid lauding the modern western democratic model as a benchmark for everything. The case of the DR Congo illustrates this point.

## State, governance and citizenship

The example of the Democratic Republic of Congo allows us to examine the difficulty of identity as it relates to governance.

“First it is necessary to define what State we are talking about. The electoral process and the establishing of institutions are done in ‘a Western’ way”, that is to say by adhering to the edicts and models of the donors that fund the process. In some ways there is something almost ‘theatrical’ in all of this and it has very little connection to the daily lives of the population.

But at the same time, the negotiation of various interests, the management of conflicts, etc, are done in a decentralized way, on the basis of another model of governance that is more ‘real’ and with its roots in local practices and traditions.”

The researcher, Mahmood Mamdani, who comes from the Great Lakes region, develops an interesting hypothesis to explain this dichotomy.<sup>1</sup>

For him, the theory of failed states ignores the very essence of these states. Yes, the apparent states, those that have been put in place by colonization as copies of Western states have failed. But state governance in Africa is the fruit of another history, the history of conquests. The colonial powers changed the nature of the State based on their need to support the occupation of a colonial territory by foreign forces. To do that, a dichotomy of state power was necessary. On one side there was the civic and modern power and on the other there was traditional power. The central state applied modern laws, while at the same time the traditional chieftaincies ruled on the basis of traditional customs and laws. The British called the system “indirect rule”, the French and Belgians used

<sup>1</sup>Mahmood Mamdani. Understanding the DR Congo, *Mail and Guardian*, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2/11/98.

other strategies. In the Belgian Congo, the Belgians tried to control the chieftaincies by transforming them into local administrative units dependent on the colonial state. In all cases, traditional governance was fragmented into a multitude of units according to the ethnic communities involved. The “modern” civic power was by its nature racist and the traditional power was by its nature ethnic. At independence postcolonial states deracialised at least in theory the “modern” centralised civic governance structures. “Race” and the roots of an individual were not to be taken into account as part of their citizenship. But traditional identity continued to be seen and experienced as ethnic. This resulted in a kind of double citizenship, one civic and the other ethnic. Civic citizenship is individual, based on a Constitution and political rights, and above all is linked to an individual’s belonging to a central state. Ethnic citizenship is communal and it confers on an individual unwritten and particularly social and economic rights. Access to land is a crucial element in this form of citizenship. Social and physical protection are others. Ethnic identity is therefore an essential element in the economic and physical survival of impoverished populations.

This permits us to understand the tendency to create and retreat into a “withdrawal into ethnic identity” during times of tension and conflict. Similarly, it permits us to understand why ethnic manipulation is a popular playing card and why it has become even more so since the start of the electoral process. It also explains why the true power in the DRC is not in the capital, Kinshasa. Nor is it anchored on the provincial level, in Kisangani, Lubumbashi, Goma, Bukavu or Bunia. Rather, it is spread out among thousands of chiefdoms that Mamdani compares to a collection of “Bantu-stans”.

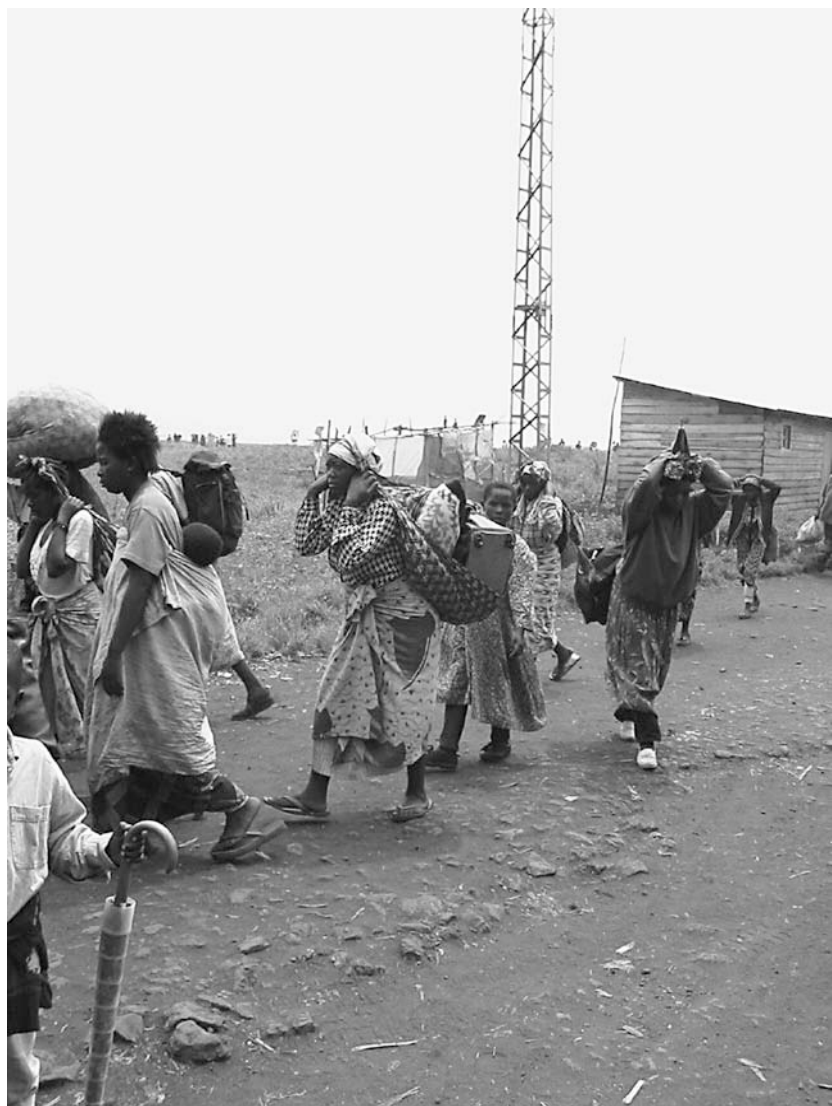
Another critical element that emerges from this is the harmful division between “local” and “non-local” people — those who originate in an area and those who don’t, which fuels severe conflicts

not only in DRC but also in a number of other African countries. What happens when one removes, on the basis on their ethnic identity, certain peoples from the realm of the central state, taking away their civic identity, thus casting doubt on their nationality? Recent events in Côte d'Ivoire and DRC illustrate the harmful consequences of such approaches.

And yet all efforts to build or rebuild the state should take into account these factors and find solutions that protect all citizens and afford them equal rights, at the same time countering the fragmentation of land into fiefdoms of warlords.

What bitter irony: the decision-makers of the international community seem to ignore these historical facts and to leave them out of their strategies, even though the last two wars in the east of the Congo were fanned by these very factors and in several parts of the country (Bas Congo, Katanga, North and South Kivu, Ituri) conflicts continue to wreak havoc, with the same causes creating the same effects!”

*(Christiane Kayser, DRC, La re-création d'un Etat sous tutelle, IN: Pole Institute, Regards Croisés, No 18 : Fin de la récréation ou début de la re-création d'un Etat? See: [www.pole-institute.org](http://www.pole-institute.org))*



### 3. Identity relations among Africans

It would be fallacious to separate identities and cultures into two large homogeneous blocks: African on one hand and Western on the other. As we will see later, the Western “camp” comprises a multitude of personalities and cultures, including Africans who return to their continent after their studies and long periods of living in Europe. On the other side, among African partners, there is also a great deal of diversity of cultures and identities. In recent times there is talk of “withdrawal into ethnic identities” in African countries, and also a tendency to reduce conflicts to “tribal” fighting. Even now, it seems we have still not managed to bury this old stereotype of Africans who are tribalistic because “it is in their blood”. And yet it is not tribalism that is the cause of acute crises; the ethnic divisions are nothing but an instrument in a body of political and economic power struggles, as Gérard Prunier illustrates in his article on Kenya (see box). In Kenya, it is the Kikuyus who, because of President Kibaki, have come to symbolize everything that has gone wrong in the post-colonial state — although of course their ethnic group is far from being the only one responsible for those ills. By contrast, Kibaki’s political opponent, Raila Odinga — whose populist and demagogic political history is far from being completely innocent — has come to personify, both as an individual and for his Luo ethnic group, all the hopes for change that have been dashed in the past five years. Deprived peoples at the bottom thus have come to blame all their suffering on the “scapegoat” of the other tribe. In spite of the mediation efforts of politicians, the ethnic divisions that are common on the level that is commonly referred to as the “street” are far from being healed. Throughout the Great Lakes region — DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda — causes for strife similar to those in Kenya have had similar effects. Communities are more divided than ever. We are still a long way from building a civic peace. The Goma Peace Conference of January 2008 illustrated how much work remains to be done to pro-



mote real dialogue among communities. But this dialogue will not be successful as long as there is no improvement in local governance. Setting up the institutions needed to construct states of law should be done in synergy with and negotiation among communities putting forward their own interests.

It is equally imperative that our peace-building efforts build bridges among communities, partner organizations and churches involved in the work. This is as true for DRC, a country as vast as a continent with its provinces practically cut off from one another because of the lack of infrastructure, as it is for the entire region of the Great Lakes where a good number of conflicts are often regarded in terms of problems among neighbours and not looked at with an eye to finding a sustainable solution at the regional level.

### **Violence, elections and ethnic identities in Africa**

Gérard Prunier illustrates the links between ethnic identities, political structures, elections and violence using the example of Kenya:

“In Africa — even in an ‘intermediate economy’ such as Kenya — the archaic nature of local capitalism affords the state a dominant role. It is therefore necessary for every component of the bourgeoisie to try to control the state if it is to enrich itself (without taking into account the importance of the control of the state in order to embezzle international aid). And yet, given the structure of African societies, it is practically impossible to control the state without an ethnic political base, which is what causes socio-economic problems to be translated almost immediately into tribal terms.

The error of international observers is often their belief that there is a kind of essential ethnicity in African politics. Ethnicity is not a

cause of political problems in Africa but it does amplify them by arbitrarily generalizing them. Here, in Kenya in 2008, it is the Kikuyus that have come to symbolize, through the fault of President Kibaki, all that has not worked in the post-colonial state — even though their ethnic group is far from being the only culprit. And by contrast Raila Odinga — whose populist and demagogic political past is far from innocent — has come to represent as an individual — and thus as an ethnic Luo — all the hopes of those disappointed by the lack of change over the past five years. This increased the risk that the dispossessed people, the victims of an oppressive system, would carry out murderous attacks and place the blame for their collective suffering on ‘scapegoats’ they perceived as all the members of an ‘oppressive ethnic group’.

The Kikuyu squatters who were burned alive in Eldoret ... found themselves victims of this process in which all the members of one ethnic group were blamed for the corrupt behaviour of their leadership. In the actual violence in Kenya, the aim must be therefore to prevent a social and economic conflict — which negotiations and political initiatives could circumscribe — from getting out of control and sliding into a full-fledged visceral and uncontrollable confrontation between tribes supporting, or forced to support, the sometimes criminal practises of their elites. When the West speaks of democracy, it must consider the very real components of the process and not just the counting of votes. As for tribalism, far from being the cause of the violence, it is nothing more than a tool. But according to the old Zen adage, when the finger points to the moon, the fool looks at the finger.”

*(Libération, 15/1/2008, Kenya: Les vieux habits du président Kibaki, by Gérard Prunier, researcher in history and contemporary politics in Central and East Africa).*

## 4. Identities and cultures

Our peace work involves bringing together many cultures: the partners within the country of intervention, whose cultures vary from one community to another, from one region to another, between men and women; and professional support persons sent by EED who — regardless of their origins — bring a Western perspective to bear on the work. What are the obstacles of this intercultural work, and indeed also the opportunities it opens up?

### a) The syndrome of saviour and victim

All of us are prisoners of both inferiority and superiority complexes.

The history of African countries is marked by colonization and the dictatorships that followed. These modes of governance created in the minds of the populations some complexes that are difficult to eliminate.

Even terms such as “developing countries” and “Third World” have shaped perceptions in the West as in Africa. Africans tend to be perceived as “victims” while Europeans view themselves and are viewed by others as “saviours”. This shapes attitudes and makes people of all stripes believe that everything that comes from the West is the norm, whether it be the democratic system, *Coca Cola*, the languages of the former colonial powers, the poor-quality poultry imported from the European Union, religion or the style of work. In this mindset, Europeans are automatically considered superior to Africans. These complexes are almost always present at the conscious or subconscious level in Africans and Europeans alike and they affect their communication, relations, analyses and the decisions they make.



*In a Cameroonian organization that employs both Africans and Europeans the head of the organization had a particular way of communicating with his African personnel on one hand and the Europeans on the other. Having made a decision, he then consulted the middle and senior management of his enterprise. With the Africans, he cast doubt on their views with the stated aim of deepening their analyses, to formulate solid proposals. But with Europeans, the discussions did not last long and were not pedantic like his consultations with the African staff. The African personnel took note of this attitude and after that used the Europeans as conduits to transmit their views and contributions to the boss. Referring to their common boss, they said, "Around Whites, he doesn't even think."*

So let's look a little more closely at the different ways we deal with each other.

## **b) The Western perspective of Africa and its backlash**

The Western view of Africa has a long history that obviously we cannot cover in detail here. Till today however, it can be said that this weighs heavily on the perceptions of Westerns and Africans, both in how they view themselves and each other. We may not always notice the influence that this history has on the different roles we find ourselves playing when we are collaborating.

It will suffice here to recall, with Cameroonian researcher, Achille Mbembe, that the African identity is an artifice with a thousand facets. It is important to study and to value the experiences his constitute that identity. The "African" is not an unmoving statue, but an individual deeply integrated into a community that evolves along with the world and is subject to multiple influences. The "African woman" is not an eternal suffering victim or a big "mama" always laughing and in a good mood. The youth of the continent struggle in numerous ways, some of them harmful, to insert themselves into modernity. (See the Annex of

this booklet, some of the worst stereotypes of Africa mirrored in an essay by Kenyan writer, Binyavanga Wainaina, who presents them with a bittersweet smile.)

But where do these stereotypes that shape people's views of Africa come from? Olivier Barlet, in the journal *Africultures*, details how the perception of the African identity has been developed and evolved, and opens a door to the future.

### **The African identity yesterday and today**

*"The African identity does not exist as a substance. It is a patchwork of different elements, shaped by a series of practical experiences."*  
Achille Mbembe, *A propos des écritures africaines de soi*, bulletin du Codesria 1, 2000, Dakar.

"Let's look back a little: when the philosophers of enlightenment defined the common nature of human beings that would become the basis of universal human rights, the question arose as to whether Africans were part of this or not — in other words, whether they were human beings, alter egos, kindred creatures. The differences were emphasized and put forward as inequalities dictated by nature; how else could the slave trade, colonization and Apartheid have been justified? Given their assigned status as pitiable animals, progress for indigenous peoples had to be achieved by civilizing them so that they could access the common status and be assimilated. To accomplish this, they would have to renounce all differences. Not surprisingly, African thinkers went to work undertaking to affirm themselves; Fanon, Césaire and Senghor emphasized the humanity of the African. Liberating oneself is the power to decide one's own identity; it is a matter of replacing 'civilization' by 'progress' and affirming the cultural distinctiveness of Africans albeit

describing them as victims. Emancipation is thus conceived as a rupture, or in the words of Achille Mbembe: “the crazy dream of a world without the Other”.

The radical discourse on identity focuses on race, geography and tradition, freely mixing up the terms to define an authenticity that promotes exclusion (you have to be Black or live in Africa to be African, etc). Mudimbe shows that the African identity is the product of an invention in which the Other has a large share, and other authors clearly define this not as a constant but as something to become, a way of thinking dominated still by the studious avoidance of self-criticism while glorifying differences. And yet, it is by moving beyond this singularity that one can mark one’s belonging in the world, not to melt into it but to bring to it what one is, and to enrich it — to view oneself as similar to one’s fellow human beings allows a person to establish a relationship with them that allows for integration without assimilation. This is certainly valuable for the entire planet.

Mbembe calls for an endogenous view that would not be merely the vindication of a lineage, genealogy or heritage, nor the rehabilitation of a sense of belonging, of difference, of country, of tradition. But then what would it be? . . . And what if being African today were nothing more than escaping projections and becoming undefinable? But not to isolate or deny oneself: rather to affirm oneself as a treasure for the world.”

Olivier Barlet, AFRICULTURES – N°41, Editorial,  
see: [www.africultures.com](http://www.africultures.com)

### c) The African view of the Western envoy

Do-gooders, humanitarians, development agents, support personnel, volunteers, advisors, saviours, missionaries, donors and other experts: the perception that Africans have of Westerners and those who copy them is also strongly shaped by the colonial past and decades of what used to be called “development aid”.

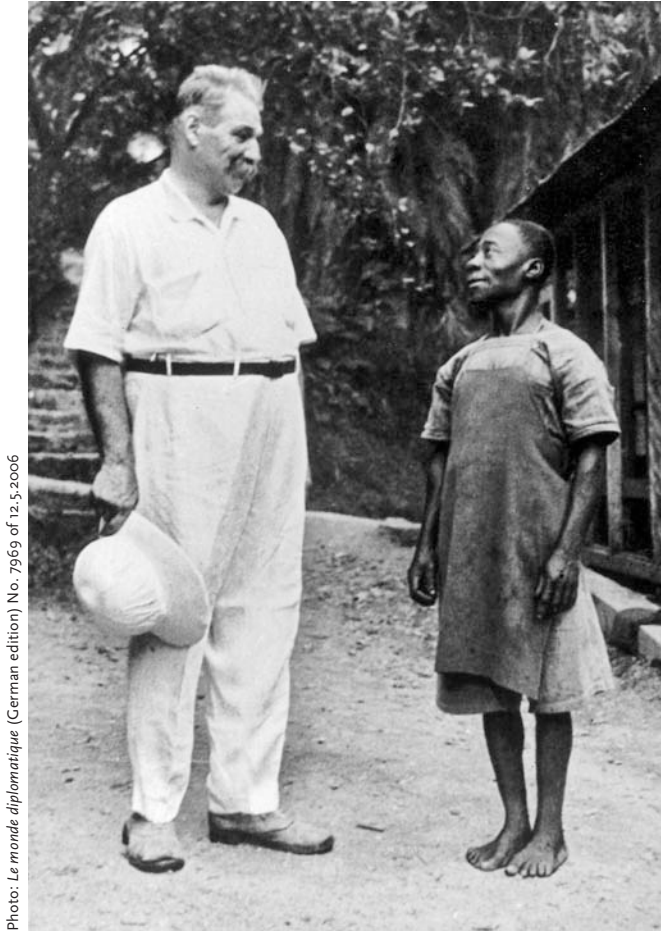


Photo: *Le monde diplomatique* (German edition) No. 7969 of 12.5.2006



The high and completely unrealistic expectations towards Westerners sent out to work in these capacities, weigh heavily on the newly arrived in Africa and they also shape their perceptions and reactions once they get there. The saviour and victim syndrome hits in full force. Of course there is absolutely no good reason to imagine that young Europeans are going to be more efficient or useful than their local colleagues in an environment with which they are unfamiliar, but in which they are almost automatically viewed — and they also view themselves — as the boss. The fact that such support persons are generally better paid than the local people of the same professional status and that they have better links to Western donors, reinforce the perception that they have direct access to the pockets of the donors. All these perceptions, however, will remain unspoken unless there are conscious efforts to construct bridges with everyone and above all, to create a spirit of openness among those working together on a particular programme or initiative.

To promote such openness, we would like you to confront, head-on, the stereotypes that still linger in African societies about those with white skin, yet are never put on the table for open discussion. We believe the confrontation is healthy.

### **The image of the White in Malian society**

In a fascinating text, “The Other at the risk of the Local and the Global: views of the European in Mali”, the Malian researcher, Moussa Sow, quotes and analyzes perceptions of Whites as they were recorded in Mali. Here are some extracts:

“The White is not interested in the Black; even when they are neighbours the White doesn’t eat or drink with the Black. His only need of the Black is as a labourer. Physically, the White may need you, but he has no need of anyone for moral or humane purposes. When he

does something, he doesn't worry how it affects others. He does exactly what he wants to do. He ridicules the views of others, and doesn't care what they think of him. Finally, his children are only for him, his wife is only for him, his car, his house and his dog are his and his alone . . .”

“Whether he's in a hurry because he isn't very sociable, or avoiding the obligations of basic social values, or a kind of snake in the grass dedicated to human degradation, the White like a metamorphosed spirit, is not a normal social being. One has to be careful dealing with him; acknowledging the power and material benefits that one might get out of it but being wary concerning human qualities. He must be approached with great caution, in keeping with the ambivalence of his being . . . He is feverish like a *ninjugu*, the strange thief of secrets. The White, whether he's a tourist, ethnologist, journalist, or just because he likes to write down what he observes, is perceived as having excessive curiosity . . .”

. . . Some who were asked say they view the European like a strange “child” . . .

“Whites dress in short clothing like children. Like children, they have a love of discovery, of exploration. That's why they visit places that for us are extremely banal. The caves, for example. They like to swim in the river and go for walks for pleasure.”

“Just like a child, the White is ready to pay a fortune to amuse and entertain himself, to experience some feeling, no matter how small. Their emotions seem to me so childish that often I have the urge to steal their money to give it to people who will use it for something practical, like, for example, solving a real problem of hunger.”

“The bad and good moods of the Whites are like those of children. The Whites, especially the women get upset about trivial things. When, for example, it seems to a White woman that some-



one has been hostile to her, she turns red, whines and has an attack of nerves. She can't put up with the smallest of annoyances, just like children who always have to be pacified. By contrast, the smallest thing can make her happy. Look how they love little statues, artisanal products like little bracelets. They are really just like children and to be honest, they irritate me."

"The White gets along well with children; it's as if they have a secret common code. Everything the child likes, the White also likes. To understand the White, you have to understand children. The child's spirit is difficult to grasp, we tend to believe that they operate on whims. In fact, they have their own imaginary worlds. The world of the White is also strange, it's not real. We waste our time trying to deal with those people." ...

"The White is transparent and honest (literally, "his stomach is pure"), at the same time that the Black is underhanded (his stomach is black), just like the colour of their respective skin. When the White does work, he does it correctly and in the open. One of the weaknesses of the Black is that he doesn't know how to pass on his knowledge. He keeps his knowledge secret, until he dies, that's how mean he is. All the old people die and take their secret knowledge with them."

"The White likes work that is well done. We, we don't like things that are straightforward. We like to take tortuous routes to arrive at our goals. The White is a hard worker. He likes those who respect hard work. If he thinks you want to progress in your own work, he will help you. If not, he will abandon you."

"If Mali were run by Whites, we wouldn't be where we are. Today, nothing works. Look at the railway, Air Mali, state enterprises. Nothing works. The bosses steal everything. In thirty years of independence we have only gone backwards. Being serious is unique to

Whites. The love of false appearances; that is our genius. I will say it clearly: I miss, like all the old employees of the railway, the time when the Whites ran our country.' . . .

“Everything that the White does, he does with an ulterior motive. Even if he invites you to eat, you should know that you will have to pay him back in one way or another. When they work with us, they intend to tie us into something, eliminate our resistance to adopting their lifestyle, and turn us into slaves in a world created by them and for them.”

“The White creates in you the desire to eat fish but he doesn't teach you how to fish but he wants you to buy fish, whether you have the means to do so or not. Everything that is bad comes from there.”

“The White doesn't give unless he is sure of getting back five times more than he gives. But Africans today have come to believe the fibs the Whites tell. They will be tricked again and forever.”

(Moussa Sow, IN: *Revue Alliances* 55–56, See: [www.tribunes.com/tribune/alliage/55-56/Sow.html](http://www.tribunes.com/tribune/alliage/55-56/Sow.html))

Let's discuss this as partners and see what comes of it. With such a weighty heritage it is a major challenge, but also a prerequisite for any improvement, to establish a true dialogue, as well as relations founded on mutual trust, and to identify common ground for our work in order to forge commitments that link us.

It is only by admitting that no one person has the solutions and by working together as a team for the same goals that we can develop relations built on trust and strengthen the potential of all sides.

## 5. Integrating personnel from abroad into partner structures

Many Westerners work in Africa within the framework of support for development. They are given different titles according to the actual structures in which they work. Many who go to Africa to work do so with good intentions, to aid, to bring about change, to contribute something positive. The term “aid” reveals all the ambiguity of the initiative that sometimes turns out to be a complicated adventure. To aid could mean being of use to others but it can also mean working to provide for the needs of others and in doing so, making them dependent. And obviously each person who heads to Africa also has personal ambitions that are not always openly stated and are sometimes subconscious — working for a cause, seeking employment, escape from a difficult personal situation or to turn his or her back on a demanding and stressful society, the search for simplicity . . .

There is no inherent problem in this, unless the Westerners box themselves in or are boxed in the role of the all powerful, the noble saviour or expert, and their colleagues have trouble seeing lucidly and constructively their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their contributions to the advancement of the work.

For peace-building work on the African continent, expatriates are sent out to work in several ways.

- European associations that conceive the projects, find the financing for them and recruit the project heads who will manage the projects in a given country. This kind of work suffers from a lack of communication with the people for whom the expatriates are sent out to work.
- Humanitarian or development agencies open a local office in a country in crisis. Expatriate staff are recruited and are supposed to

develop a symbiosis with local partners in the mission and with projects working to reduce violence and stabilize the situation.

- Certain agencies respond favourably to a request from local partners to send out personnel who integrate into the local team as employees.

This latter approach has numerous advantages but it also poses numerous challenges. In choosing to send out a professional support person as an employee in a local structure, the likelihood of strengthening the local partner is increased. For the structure to be truly strengthened, the professional support persons must adapt to the expressed needs of the structure and be able to contribute to solutions. The local dynamics that were behind the creation of the local structure are maintained. On the other hand, the original group dynamics within the local structure risk being disrupted by the arrival of a person from outside, with both positive and negative effects.





## 6. Intercultural collaboration in Africa: for a collection of stories

Intercultural collaboration in any kind of cooperation demands going beyond the self to accommodate others. This can create a lot of misunderstandings and even absurd situations. There are some wonderful stories of success and mutual learning and we hope to experience and describe many more. But there are also failures and traumatic situations from which we need to draw lessons about the particularities of the individuals and organizations involved. It is counterproductive to try to place “blame” or to belabour failures. Any lack of fruitful communication always involves both sides. What is important is to search together in the wealth of shared experiences for those that lend insight into how to improve our efforts. What are your experiences, your stories? We invite you to send them to us — stories that have made their mark on you, made you smile, shocked you, made you reflect. Describe your moments of uncertainty, doubt, discouragement, but also your moments of hope, courage and pleasure. Share with us your discoveries of why something didn’t work or what avenues might have made it all work better. We would like to create a mosaic, a multi-coloured tapestry of all your small histories that will help us progress together. Send your contributions to: *fdjateng9@gmail.com*.

## 7. Local structures in crisis zones

The Civil Peace Services work in situations of prolonged conflict, as well as when a state of law is being established after elections. Nevertheless, a number of the characteristics of the prolonged crisis still affect the work in most of the regions and countries.

### ***Characteristics of the prolonged crisis:***

(drawn from “Intervention model in a situation of prolonged crisis”, CREDAP, Goma, DRC. August 2000).

Typically provoked by conflicts among armed groups of one country or of neighbouring countries, this type of crisis often lasts several years. The effect of the crisis goes beyond the economic sector to make itself felt in several domains:

- the continuous destruction of property, productive and other, which results in widespread suffering (loss of income, malnutrition, deterioration of health, education, leisure activities . . . );
- chronic insecurity, with the consequences of:
  - repeated displacement of the population (especially rural people) fleeing armed combat;
  - increasing concentration of displaced peoples in centres they consider safe, adding to the local population there already stressed by the situation;
- the dissolution of the state and its institutions together with a crisis of legitimate authority;
- the destruction of the environment;
- the deprivation of morals (rape, prostitution, theft . . . );
- a crisis of orientation/meaning (collapse of socio-cultural reference points)

***Possible secondary effects:***

- destabilisation of existing organizations at the moment the crisis breaks out and blatant ineffectiveness of “classic” and “heavyweight” organizations in the new situation;
- destabilisation of leaders of these organizations and ineffectiveness of the well-known development schemes (frameworks of reference, tools, methodology ...);
- forced or self-imposed exile of several leaders

***But, on the positive side:***

- Opportunities, often unique, for accelerated social changes opened up by the crisis

***Objectives of providing support to local structures:***

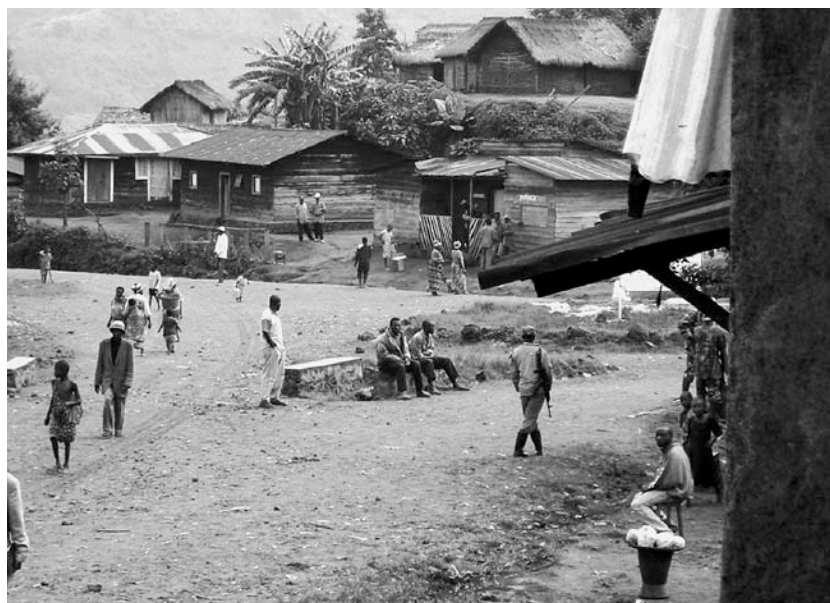
Develop/reinforce the capacities (the “performance”) of local partner structures to intervene effectively in their milieu in line with their purpose (vision and mission). We note that the partners best adapted to a situation of prolonged crisis are characterized by having:

- a structure with very “light” infrastructure
- a manner of functioning that is very “flexible / supple / mobile”

At the level of local support structures, there are two main types:

- structures that support development,
- structures that offer emergency assistance

The structures offering emergency assistance intervene in situations of full crisis, humanitarian disasters, displacement of peoples, etc. They act on a short-term basis and their actions are widely covered in the media. With the support of international structures, they contribute to easing human suffering with shelter, medicine, health care, food aid, water, etc.



Structures offering support to development efforts over the long term work with local populations to develop strategies that can handle the consequences of war, namely:

- loss of quality of life
- community disintegration
- rupture of productive activities (agricultural, animal husbandry, industrial, etc.)
- environmental degradation

Support structures in crisis zones require several kinds of support to ensure the best possible quality of their intervention:

## **Operational support**

In accordance with their sectors of intervention, the structures need to improve their performances, control or adopt new and appropriate techniques to solve their problems. The local structure wishes to have one or more persons with professional competence and experience on the ground in a given discipline, in short a person with technical expertise in that area.

## **Organizational support**

To get their activities going, local structures create mechanisms (services, administrative units, branches) with various responsibilities. The success of the services they offer is often the basis for the creation of new mechanisms. This growth of the local structure thereby generates the need to assure a measure of coherence among the mechanisms to guarantee that it achieves its objectives. A change of context can also result in a need for organizational change. This change can be minor or it can mean a complete restructuring of the whole set-up. In all these

circumstances, it is necessary to expect some resistance inside the structure. Every structure seeking to ensure its own usefulness will develop a process of internal self-evaluation to increase the quality and efficiency of its interventions. This involves looking at the organization itself, progress made, resources used (material, human, financial). At the organizational level, local structures seek professional support persons capable of analyzing and reinforcing its existing internal processes, as well as its organizational capacities.

## Political support

Without a political analysis of the crisis situation and its effects, it is not possible to have an effective strategy. This has nothing to do with the politicians' politics (political parties, access to the reins of political power, etc). Rather, politics here means the choices of orientations, of development strategies, of partners, and the conception of the logic of interventions. The politics of a local organization are a product its history and of the vision that it seeks to develop and attain.

*It is worthwhile looking at the example of **CRAFOD** (Regional Centre of Support and Training for Development or Centre Régional d'Appui et de Formation pour le Développement). CRAFOD is a development structure of the ECC (Eglise du Christ au Congo) in DR Congo. It intervenes in the following areas:*

- *gender and HIV/AIDS*
- *productive activities involving animals and plants*
- *environmental protection*
- *strengthening of community and institutional capacities*

**CRAFOD** works primarily in Bas Congo, a province characterized by:

- *economic potential that does not benefit the local population; the oil revenues do not benefit the province*

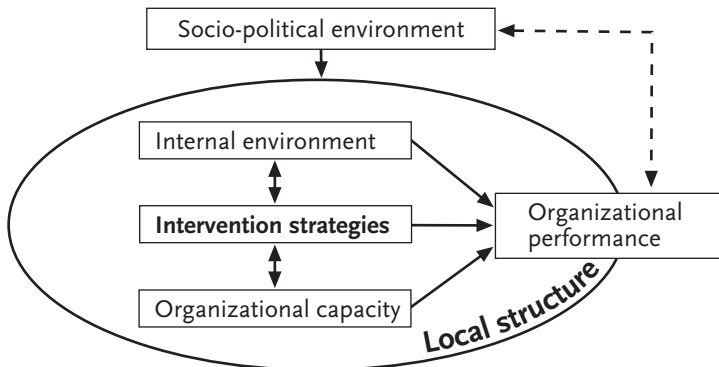
- growing impoverishment of the population
- strong potential of arable lands and manual labour
- strong spiritual potential
- strong influence of the political-religious movement, Bundu Dia Kongo
- widespread use of the Kinkongo language as a vehicle for maintaining the Kongo cultural values

At the end of 2006, as part of an analysis of the context in which it works, CRAFOD found itself confronted by the problems of local governance in the province. The relationship between this new theme and the activities undertaken by CRAFOD was critical for the leadership of the team.

In view of this, the management of CRAFOD expressed the need to:

- develop a strategy for governance work
- share the new vision with all personnel
- develop a logic of intervention taking former activities into account
- preserve the respect that they enjoy in the province
- maintain and consolidate CRAFOD's identity

This is about a structure in the throes of profound change that requires support for it to reinforce its strategic plan. At this point, CRAFOD submitted a request for support to the CPS/EED programme.



*Factors influencing the performance of an organization*

## **8. Participants in the Civil Peace Services**

Three principles are at the basis of the approach EED uses for “placing” professional support persons in an organization in the South.

### **Autonomy of the local partner**

A local structure working to improve living conditions of populations can solicit a professional support person to reinforce its work. EED doesn't intervene except on demand from a local structure, which chooses the project, the action or activities that it wishes to be reinforced.

### **Independence of the local partner**

From the very first stages of negotiation between the local structure and EED, it is made clear that the professional support person who will be provided will be an employee of the local organization. While financial support may be provided to cover the costs of that person's placement in the structure (salary, lodging, basic materials, travels as requested by the structure), the professional support person has the official status of an employee.

### **Professionalism**

The professional support person sent to a crisis zone should not only have relevant professional experience in the field, but also intercultural competence and a demonstrated aptitude for working within a team. That person should also contribute added value to the structure.

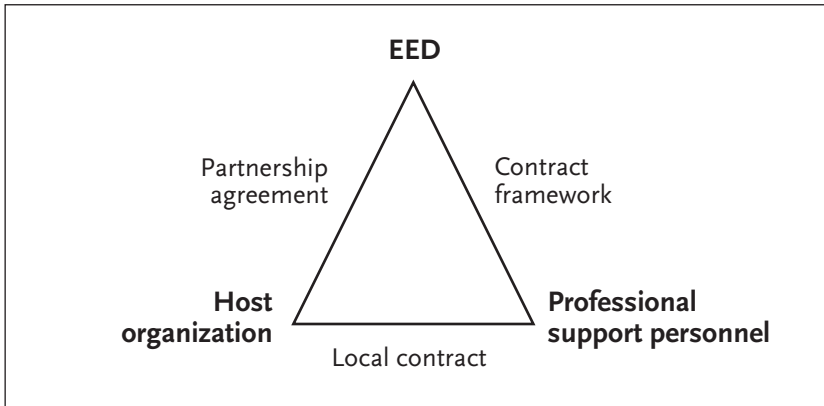


## Professionals from the North and South

EED does not limit its response to requests for support from local structures to the provision of expatriates. The EED mechanism is geared for research, recruitment, training and the placing of qualified personnel, either Europeans or persons whose origins are in the South. In total there are five different instruments within the human resources department of EED. The human resources cooperation for development, the reintegration of personnel from the South in their country(ies) of origin, complementary measures in election observation and human rights monitoring, as well as the Civil Peace Services which is subject to German law about development assistants and which concerns only Europeans.

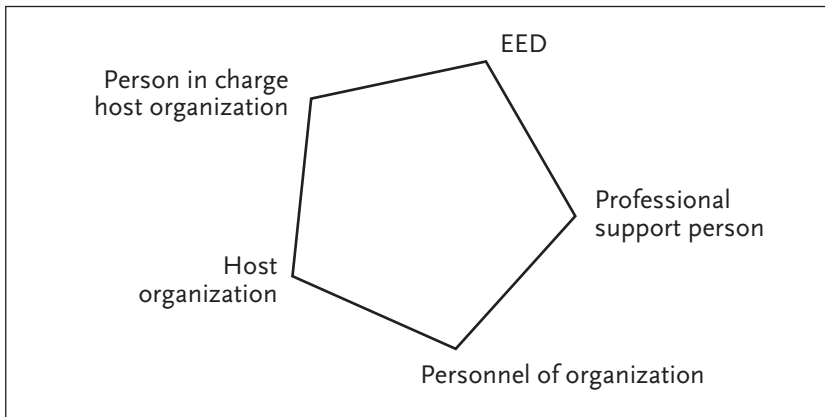
The Civil Peace Services aims at better human relationships among peoples. True peace is not just about an absence of military violence in warfare, not just the product of negotiations among structures and systems, but it is based on the respect for human dignity, the promotion of attitudes and values that demand the involvement of all the stakeholders.

The CPS/EED programmes have specifically as their aim to “promote a culture of peace with local partners”. The plan for EED cooperation employs three principal actors as illustrated by the following triangle:



The institutional bases of the partnership are established among the three actors who take on commitments and put a framework in place.

On the arrival of the professional support person, two more actors are added who — in addition to the main function of the host organization and of its Board of Directors — play a major role in the operational plan, namely the person in charge of the host organization and the personnel of that organization. The triangle is thus transformed into a five-sided figure.



#### Fields of action of CPS/EED

- develop linking structures across conflict lines
- Créer des espaces de dialogue
- reinforce information and communication structures for analysis of violent conflicts
- reintegrate and rehabilitate groups affected by the violence
- build capacity of individuals and reinforce institutions in negotiation of interests and in organizational development
- promote peace education
- contribute to a culture of respect for rights at the local, national and regional levels

## **The Coordination and Assistance Team**

Because of the high stakes and the challenges of its programme, the CPS Great Lakes / EED set up a Coordination and Assistance Team comprising three consultants who help coordinate, support and offer advice. The main mission of the consultants is to:

- facilitate better collaboration between the professional support person and the host organization to ensure correct preparation, appropriate training and coaching, organizational monitoring, useful information, workshops for analysis and reflection
- contribute to the development of the CPS programme concept
- facilitate networking among organizations that employ professional support persons
- contribute to networking with other German actors from CPS
- promote contact with the German and African authorities
- note lessons learned and capitalize on these experiences, producing educational materials

In the course of an CPS / EED workshop, the local organizations and professional support persons expressed their expectations of the Coordination Team:

- do backstopping and provide advice for the development of CPS
- assist the organizations and professional support persons to overcome difficulties encountered in their work
- support the actions taken by the organizations
- facilitate the strengthening of capacities of partner organizations
- supervise the self-evaluation process
- facilitate context analysis and draw attention to new factors affecting the programme

- keep an eye on and ear open to the dynamics of the political context
- exchange information on methods, instruments and experiences (questions, weaknesses, etc) related to work in conflict settings or concerning peace
- do backstopping for intercultural communication
- assist in the setting up of a system of communication among the actors
- contribute to the development of tools for CPS training
- capitalize on the approach and publicize it
- produce methodological tools
- supervise the professional support persons and those in charge of the organization
- contribute to the development of a “security plan” for each professional support person
- monitor and offer reminders on the conditions for success
- assist in clarifying any misunderstandings
- participate in lobbying work of the network when necessary

## 9. The challenges of collaboration

### a. The asymmetry of preparation, expectations and perceptions

Preparations for collaboration are often very intensive for the professional support person. He or she has training, internships and advice intended to facilitate their effective insertion within the local organization.

On the other hand, the preparation done by the local organization to welcome the professional support person is often superficial and it suffers from a shortage of both time and resources. With few exceptions, there is generally no meeting among the parties before the contract is signed. Negotiations, information exchanges and contacts are made by post, email and other forms of distant communication. Expectations and perceptions that are not discussed in any depth begin to form between the local structure and the professional support person.

In the course of their preparation in Europe, the professional support persons are often told that “in Africa you need to have a lot of patience”, and they are advised that when they do arrive in Africa they should “take your time, especially take time at first to observe, and to become integrated”, all of which are in fact good advice.

But this inculcates in the professional support persons a reluctance to throw themselves rapidly into the work, to avoid taking on responsibilities right away, and a hesitation even to start work at all.

Then, when they arrive in Africa, the person in charge of the local organization goes to meet them at the airport and already says things such as, “we expect a lot of you, starting tomorrow you need to do this and that”. This creates a difficult situation and causes misunderstanding on both sides. Communication between the two parties may be blocked and no one knows what to do, nor to whom they should address themselves to try solve the problem.

## **b. The imbalance of available resources**

The plan to send out professional personnel includes provisions to facilitate their insertion in the new location and work setting, and also to support the local organization: salary, lodging, basic materials, computer, sometimes some small funding for activities. Compared with what is available to the personnel in the host organization and country, this gives the professional support persons an advantage which can make them seem like special people and affect communication and also the perception of their role.

*In a local organization in Africa, after consultation with a support organization, EED provided a vehicle at the time of the arrival of the professional support person. To promote the support that EED was providing, the local organization placed the name “EED” on the vehicle beside its own logo. According to the contract, the vehicle belonged to the local organization, and thus could be used by all of its personnel. But the vehicle was used primarily by the professional support person, and the other personnel came to see the professional support person as privileged, and to believe the vehicle belonged to that person. In a context of poverty, access to a vehicle is seen as a benefit and it confers on the owner a certain status. How can the misunderstandings and obstacles that result from such a situation be managed?*

## **c. The ravages of stereotypes and prejudices**

Managing intercultural interactions and prejudices is a key factor in collaboration between an organization in the South and a professional from the North. During the workshop to launch the CPS Great Lakes/EED programme, the participants played an intercultural game involving the prejudices about “Blacks and Whites”. The results of the game revealed the magnitude of those prejudices, which threaten the wealth and potential of intercultural experience. The participants were invited

to list some characteristics or perceptions of “Blacks” and “Whites”. Each participant was asked to give an example for each category. Here is what came out of the exercise.

<b>Characteristics of Blacks: (written by Blacks and Whites)</b>	<b>Characteristics of Whites: (written by Blacks and Whites)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Insult a lot with their words</li> <li>■ Sincerity</li> <li>■ They always blame their brothers and sisters for everything</li> <li>■ Very religious</li> <li>■ Don't respect time, flexible about time</li> <li>■ Unorganized, chaotic</li> <li>■ Like to “wait and see”</li> <li>■ Lack of initiative</li> <li>■ Mendicity</li> <li>■ Dishonest</li> <li>■ Beggar</li> <li>■ Liars</li> <li>■ Hypocrites</li> <li>■ Blacks don't read</li> <li>■ Acts before thinking</li> <li>■ Irrational</li> <li>■ Always late</li> <li>■ Blacks / Africans like to laugh and dance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Spirit of domination over poor Blacks</li> <li>■ Insecure</li> <li>■ Strict</li> <li>■ Indiscreet</li> <li>■ The White is not direct</li> <li>■ Punctual and rich</li> <li>■ Lack flexibility</li> <li>■ Arrogant</li> <li>■ The project money belongs to the Whites</li> <li>■ Too strict, too organized</li> <li>■ Lacking confidence</li> <li>■ Has prejudices</li> <li>■ Always applying pressure</li> <li>■ Hard-working</li> <li>■ They want to know everything about us but they don't tell us much about themselves</li> <li>■ Disrespectful</li> <li>■ Self-interests before everything else</li> <li>■ They think they “know everything”</li> <li>■ They have a bad smell</li> </ul>

This exercise reflects the strong influence of perceptions about each other, which we discussed in the chapter on identities and cultures, pages 18 to 28. As the Coordination and Assistance Team is itself inter-cultural we were able to deal with this delicate theme, knowing that together we would be able to discuss frankly the influences and fallout of these prejudices with the participants.

This exercise shows how the stereotypes linked with skin colour are still alive and strong, threatening to divide participants rather than

bringing them together, unless we acknowledge and are conscious of the stereotypes.

**The predominance of the “negative” in the table shows how little attention is paid to each others’ positive qualities.** These are the kinds of negative ideas that are often used in tense situations so that the abscess cannot be lanced, the issues behind the prejudices about a group of people cannot be dealt with in a way that would allow us to deal with the individuals right in front of us. What emerges is a growing distrust, the poison that kills all fruitful collaboration.



The first thing we (one Black and one White in the Coordination and Assistance Team) did was to position ourselves right in front of the bulletin boards on which the cards had been pinned that listed all the prejudices about our own group, and have a participant read them out loud. Then we changed places and the list was read out loud again. The exercise was highly emotional for all of us and it permitted us to put our fingers right on the negative effects of the stereotypes. To address prejudices, stereotypes and taboo subjects is something that can and should be done among people engaged in the same combat. The objective should not be to unload everything, to tell someone else every bad thing that we think about them; rather the idea is to build a relationship of mutual trust. We also noticed that to laugh together about the absurdity of some stereotypes is a useful and healthy exercise.

### **Stereotypes and prejudices: how they relate to each other**

Both of these lists of prejudices are manifestations of a collective mentality and they do not hold up under analysis. They are part of



the evaluation of others. A prejudice is a judgement (positive or negative) that precedes experience, a deeply held preconceived thought or dogma that can shape opinion if it is not analyzed and unveiled. It's safe to say that a prejudice is a position, an attitude, a global tendency, for or against, favourable or unfavourable, towards a group of people that is then applied to individuals on the basis of their apparent or real belonging to that group. A prejudice is linked to emotion. There is clearly a connection between prejudices and stereotypes; stereotypes can express prejudices, rationalize them and justify them. Stereotypes can also give rise to prejudices, shaping an attitude of exclusion or acceptance of others. Prejudices are generally based on stereotypes, but all stereotypes are not necessarily prejudices.

### **The double role of stereotypes**

Stereotypes have a double role in the realms of identity and the cognitive. They converge to produce boundaries between the “we” and what is “not we”. The definition of self is based on the construction of that difference. To attribute to others a model of behaviour divergence, to fail to see what we share, defines how we define ourselves relative to others: to be, is to be other. The devaluing of the other is almost always a corollary of valuing of one's own group.

Stereotypes and prejudices are part of a spontaneous tendency of the human spirit to seek in the scheme of things a way to control the surroundings, establish relationships, live together, interact with other people, and it happens for good reasons in an environment that derails us, awakens — or even exacerbates — in each of us the need to be able to assess things so that we can control the situation: this is the cognitive function.

## d. Clash of cultures

Faced with a new culture, each person will experiment and seek ways to adapt. This could be at the heart of the clash between cultures that can arise when people of different cultures work together. The professional support person is confronted by ways of working that he or she may not even be able to imagine. Even though they rub shoulders with each other every day and share the same working space, the people of different cultures who work together sometimes have very little knowledge of each other. Any kind of reaction can spark a clash that can affect working relations.

*The CPS/EED workshops are occasions for people from several cultures to meet each other. This situation is conducive to phenomena called “clashes of cultures”. In the course of one of our workshops, the participants were invited to analyze the collaboration between the professional support persons who had been placed and their local colleagues. The theme was known in advance — as was the working tool (a form to be filled out to analyze the collaboration), and the exercise method (working in three groups: those in charge of the local organizations; professional support personnel; colleagues — and then regrouping for the plenary), but we still experienced a problem in making it work. It was difficult for the facilitators of the workshop to know whether the group of participants were at the stage of “unconscious incompetence” or “unconscious competence”. The participants had two reactions. Some agreed to undertake the exercise in collaboration analysis and applied themselves to it while others simply refused to be part of it. At first glance, the impasse might seem normal, explained by a lack of understanding of the work by the participants who refused to do it. But the reasons they offered were cultural differences. The arguments they advanced stopped the facilitators from seeing the roots of the problem. Whether it had to do with a true difference in cultures or not, the central question is whether this is acceptable in this case or in others where intercultural differences are used as a pretext for blocking the development of objectives, principles, of ways to work together, in short a new culture that we build together.*



*Those persons experiencing culture shock because of intercultural work adopt attitudes that vary from “unconscious incompetence” to “unconscious competence”, with variations of “conscious incompetence” or “conscious competence”.*

- *“Unconscious incompetence” is a stage of “blissful ignorance”. At this stage, you are unaware of cultural differences. It does not occur to you that you may be making cultural mistakes or that you may be misinterpreting much of what is going on around you.*
- *“Unconscious competence” is a stage where you no longer have to think about you are doing to behave in an appropriate way. Culturally appropriate behaviour has now become second nature for you and it now takes little effort for you to be culturally sensitive.*

Extract from an Independent Learning Module on International Work Skills (Adaptation Skills), Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada

*We thus had a profoundly unsettling experience. On one side were participants who refused to take part in the exercise by advancing as their excuse cultural reasons. On the other, participants who did the exercise felt their colleagues were “hiding” behind culture, using it as a pretext to avoid debates or to avoid doing what was expected of them. The cultural issue takes on a special dimension depending on the make-up of the working groups and the results. Those who agreed to participate in the exercise were all African; those who refused were all expatriates. We find ourselves here with division (if we wish to call it that, based on the ethnic criteria), something clearly harmful that our “Do No Harm” approach demands that we either avoid or overcome. The (intercultural) Coordination Team did all it could to end the impasse, but remains conscious of the fact that such a situation can have repercussions.*

## e. Communication among participants

Communication and transmission of information have an enormous effect on the nature of the relationship among partners. It is the European agency that receives the request from the local organization, so it handles the recruitment, does the canvassing, organizes the research on the basis of an outline developed in close collaboration with the partner organization, then recruits and prepares the professional for the integration for his or her posting. On the other hand, the preponderant position of the European agency in the identification and recruitment of the professional support person, and its facility with the language (German for German structures) of communication can cause problems in the communication between the agency and the local organization that will host the professional support person.

In the same vein, for the organization in the South, the existence of informal communication networks and the lack of mastery of French and the local language(s) by the German professional can cause the expatriate to feel excluded or marginalized. **We should not forget that behind these communication problems there often lie hidden issues of the logic of power.**

### Practises that can harm communication

- Informal contacts between the European agency (EED, for example) and the professional support person regarding questions of interest excluding the local organization
- The creation by the professional support person of parallel support structures that override the local organization in its work
- The professional support person organizes research funds for local groups without the knowledge of the local organization
- The professional support person engages in political movements behind the back of the local organization
- Local personnel hold meetings of the team without informing the professional support person
- Local personnel make the “real” (important) decisions outside the structure’s framework, excluding the professional support person

And finally, let us not forget that there are non-verbal forms of communication that can speak volumes if we know how to interpret them:

*In Burkina Faso a group of consultants and professional support persons made a field visit and “descended” [sic] on a village where a bilateral development project had been working for a long time. Their visit had been announced well in advance. On their arrival, the villagers had them sit on a tree trunk they had improvised as a bench in the middle of the village, and began to present their plan of activities with visual resources. The visitors noticed a large number of children and youth and very few adults present. Then, after about a half an hour, they noticed that they were sitting in full sunshine on the bench, which was very uncomfortable with the temperature at 40 degrees in the shade. There was no way for them to move, because they were surrounded by people. They decided not to stay, and cut short their visit. Later, they learned that at the same time they’d been making their visit, there had been an important ceremony going on in the sacred forest and that the villagers had found a polite way to rid themselves of the visitors.*

This communication could not have been clearer for anyone who knew how to interpret it. Do we know how to read the messages that our colleagues and people with whom we work are trying to give us?

# 10. Collaborative learning

## ■ Defining the goals of the collaboration

Collaboration brings into play roles of the people working together. A role is a formal or informal relation to which those who are collaborating or who wish to collaborate with each other agree, depending on what they expect of each other. It's a *negotiated relationship* in which all subjects are legitimate and open for discussion. A role is not pre-ordained and the negotiation of a role is not a single act; it's a process that permits the relationship to develop on the basis of agreement and activities that can create trust among those collaborating on any project. Clarifying roles means it is necessary for us to communicate on:



- our mandate
- the objectives of the support being provided
- the values that guide us
- the principles with which we want to work
- the resources available to us for the work
- the methods and instruments that we will use and on which we will depend
- the criteria to be used to measure the success of the cooperation

Confidence will grow if this concept is coherent and it corresponds to the concrete activities and if it evolves. This can also mean regular re-clarification of roles.

### **■ Involving local partners in the recruitment plans of the professional support person**

The request from the local structure with the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the kind of professional support person being sought launches a process of identification and recruitment of that professional. After the request, the process temporarily moves out of the hands the local structure. The European agency continues to do its research and does not involve the local structure until the candidates are chosen for the post of professional support person. On the basis of their CVs, the local structure then makes its choice. The other stages of the process continue under the auspices of the European agency, right up to the time the contacts are signed.

This process could be improved, starting with the principles behind it. The fact that the European agency seeks the candidates should be handled as if it were a responsibility that the local structure had delegated to the agency, and not as if the leaders of the local structure had relinquished this responsibility, handed it over to someone else. Viewed from this perspective, the local structure should play more of a leading



role. But how to take into account the differences in context, the distances between countries, the regulations of the different countries, not forgetting as well the financial costs that result, etc?

At the initial stage, helping the local structure understand that it should play a role in this search for candidates for professional support positions should stimulate reflection, encourage the local organization to take responsibility and to prepare itself to manage the new professional support personnel. To determine the qualifications of the professional being sought, the two parties — the European agency and the local structure — should exchange ideas on the roles and responsibilities of the position, on the possibilities of searching for candidates and hiring which ensure that the local structure is involved as much as possible in the various procedures. When the professional has been identified, it will be necessary to seize all existing opportunities to facilitate contact between the employer (the local structure) and the employee (the professional support person). These contacts are only beneficial if the employers play their role fully and if they do not perceive their employees merely as a means to get their hands on development funds.

### ■ **The integration of the professional support person within the local structure**

The integration of the professional support person is often done in a makeshift way with a maximum of shocks, some of which cause immediate embarrassment while others will be felt later. We believe that this integration phase merits careful management with a process that pays attention to all the existing intercultural issues. Time will be saved later on if all the possibilities are evaluated at the beginning, and these can also be useful to improve the integration of the professional support person. The success of that integration is at the heart of collaborative learning that will be done by professional support persons and their host organizations. Three main factors are involved in this learning:

- mutual expression of views
- the search for a common vision
- the reinforcement of collaboration

A continuous exchange of views (formal and informal) offers the various actors the chance to voice their perspectives on a given subject. The analysis and discussion that follow can help the different parties identify the factors that will lead to a vision on which they agree, and establish a basis for their common commitment. These are the factors that constitute a foundation for collaboration among them. Managing these three main factors and their influences should involve all the collaborators of the professional support person.

In other ways, the decision to seek candidates with extra qualifications for a given post, the various processes that have to be followed, and the cultural factors of this decision are subjects that deserve to be discussed by both those in charge of the host organization and the future collaborators of the professional support person to be recruited. Then, when the professional support person arrives, these three factors should be at the base of all discussions and of the management of any misunderstanding.

Eventually, a teambuilding workshop (see next section) can be organized with all the collaborators of the professional support person; this can be done with the assistance of consultants.

## TEAMBUILDING

### Integrating the professional support person

#### Prerequisites:

The process of building a team is begun by the Coordination and Assistance Team with the aim of facilitating the integration into the team of the new professional support person already in place. This process has been tried by the Coordination and Assistance Team of the CPS/EED programme with local organizations that have requested and received expatriate personnel. The Coordination and Assistance Team is a mechanism conceived and put in place by EED to support, back-stop, advise and coordinate local organizations and expatriate personnel sent out to provide professional support to peace-building missions. The strengths of this Coordination and Assistance Team are the following:

- It is a team of African and European men and women.
- They have profound knowledge of the intervention zone and local organizations.
- They are well-versed in organizational development.
- They have long experience in advising support organizations working in development (training, evaluation, teambuilding, project management, conception of projects and programmes).
- They have well-developed abilities in animating and effective use of many participatory learning tools (sculpture, aquarium, map drawing,<sup>2</sup> role playing, unstructured surveys, etc).

<sup>2</sup>“Sculpture” and “aquarium” are both methods for participatory learning. In “sculpture”, participants arrange themselves into a living sculpture to express their perception of a situation or a problem. In the case of the DR Congo, this sculpture should reflect the situation of the country itself and the international context. For example, someone might stand on a table to represent the international community, holding the government’s hands and directing them from “on

During a two-week mission, two consultants from the Coordination and Assistance Team organizes a series of activities with staff of the local organization. The objective is to strengthen the local organization and at the same time to facilitate the integration of a professional support person within the organization. Key words in the process are:

- explore
- understand
- know
- support and advise

## Activities

### ***Working sessions***

The team of consultants organizes working sessions either face-to-face or with a group of people in order to understand the functioning and the implementation of activities of the local organization. The persons involved in this exercise belong to the following structures:

- hierarchical superiors (in the local organization) of the new professional support person
- administrators of the local organization (service personnel, financial, direct collaborators with the organization's leader)
- representative(s) of the professional support person's service or unit
- any services (projects) having a direct working relationship with the service (project) of the professional support person

high". In "aquarium", some participants sit in the middle and discuss among themselves, whereas the others watch and listen to them as if they were looking at fish in an aquarium. After this, the outer circle has the opportunity to comment on the discussion of the inner circle. In "drawing", participants are asked to draw a map of the "landscape of the actors" or of their place in the map of DR Congo.

During the working sessions, the consultants gather information, retrace the collaborative links between the various services and the working unit in which the professional support person works, collecting “success stories”, compiling a list of difficulties and suggesting ways to overcome these difficulties. Such small workshops can help the organization deal with any real difficulty encounters.

### ***Workshops***

Workshops that are organized should address well-defined needs. Two kinds of workshops can be held during the mission:

- Workshops that deal with needs that are clearly identified during working sessions. These short workshops offer participants the room and chance to reflect, to begin their search for solutions or to strengthen their capacity to deal with a particular theme (identify results, assess impacts, prepare reports, modify projects, understand the logical framework, understand the nature of institutional or organizational development, etc.).
- A workshop in teambuilding with the service or unit that employs the new professional support person.

### ***Field visits***

The field visit is a complementary activity to the working sessions. Field visits are done with the partners in the field, the “target groups” or “beneficiaries”, institutional partners (other structures that work in the same area and collaborate with the local organization) and donor organizations of the local organization (those that are present in the mission area).

## Structure of the teambuilding workshop

The aim of the teambuilding workshop is to reinforce the links among members of the team to increase the quality of the services it renders. The workshop should also help the professional support person find his or her place within the group. The proposed structure is the following:

1. representation of the local organization in the geographic intervention zone of its services or units that employ the new professional support person (“map drawing” participatory tool).
2. representation of the services within the local organization (“map drawing” participatory tool)
3. representation of the various groups within the services that use the expertise of the professional support person (by participatory learning methods of “map drawing” or “sculpture”)
4. input on the characteristics of a well-functioning team
5. individual work on the proposals/offers and expectations of each member of the team to ensure quality of the collaboration and their work

The first three of these involve working in groups to determine the various perceptions that exist among team members. Discussions within the working groups and during plenary sessions are an opportunity to clarify things and construct a common vision for all the members of the team.

The third point ensures not only that sub-groups are represented within the team, but also that relations among them are considered. It is this kind of interaction that leads to clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the professional support person. Sculpture is used to help each person, including professional support persons, find their places within the team.

The fourth point is useful in introducing the key factors that make a team work well. Comparisons with sports that involve teams (football, basketball, volleyball, etc) or musical groups (bands and orchestras) help participants understand the group dynamics that make a team function well. This means explaining each characteristic, and giving examples, including those from personal experience. Below are some of the characteristics of a well-functioning team:

- same objectives and goals
- ease of communication
- able leadership
- roles and positions are clear for each team member
- each person's qualities and expertise are appreciated
- a balance between rewards and sanctions
- there is room for friendly relations and interactions
- individual and collective commitment

The fifth point lays the groundwork for the identification of actual factors that shape the collaboration within the team. In connection with the characteristics of a well-functioning team, each member is invited to present his or her proposals/offers and expectations to strengthen the team spirit among them.

All the proposals/offers and expectations are written on cards and posted. Participants read them, ask questions about them and offer their points of view. At the end, the workshop facilitator ensures that no subject has been forgotten or overlooked. He or she asks team members to commit themselves to respecting their own proposals/offers and to monitor expectations. The facilitator also points out that all the expectations may not be satisfied, but that the suggestions constitute a very useful resource in reinforcing team dynamics.

The workshop ends by putting in place a commission charged with following up on the commitments that have been made,

both the proposals/offers and the expectations. A date is set to discuss the results of the collaboration among the members of the team. For this analysis, see the educational paper entitled “Analysis of collaboration”, page 65 - 71.

© CPS-Great Lakes / EED, Coordination and Assistance Team

## ■ The influence of social relationships within local structures (collective identities)

In Africa, as everywhere, there are social circles — both formal and informal — within organizations. These circles are a forum for personnel to get together outside their shared professional work objectives and they also respond to certain needs or social criteria, such as mobilizing savings in informal “banking” schemes, links to a village of origin, bonds formed in school, sharing views on current events, conversations over a beer, etc. This phenomenon is more prominent in Africa, partly because the state rarely provides the population with even a minimum of basic services. Such groups, various kinds of formal and informal social circles, help people — in the general population as within organizations — find answers for daily problems they face because of the inability of the state to do so for them.

The newly-landed professional support person should understand the nature and importance of these social relationships in the lives of the people and the everyday workings of the local structure. These social groupings within organizations shape hierarchical relationships, power structures, mechanisms of regulation, decision-making in governance, and all the components of the organization. For some individuals, the organization for which they work is sometimes the very centre of their lives. For example, there are some professional employees who spend most of their time at work in the office, including weekends. But when a



relative such as a father passes away, that same professional will need two weeks to prepare the funeral, even though the labour laws grant only three days for this.

## ■ **Monitoring the collaboration**

The work of the professional support persons, as for all the employees, should be monitored. This monitoring should take into account the support person's need for useful information that helps him or her understand the new professional setting in which he or she is working, the colleagues and collaborators with whom he or she is working, the working context and its evolution. Monitoring should be planned so that there are scheduled times for the professional support person and those in charge of the local organization to dedicate themselves to evaluating and reinforcing their collaboration.

## Analysis of the collaboration

***Purposes:***

1. to examine one's collaboration with colleagues and fellow workers
2. explore ways to improve collaboration
3. prepare a session for self-evaluation of the collaboration among colleagues working in the same service
4. improve the organizational culture of a structure or a service

This instrument should be used in pairs or in a group. It is developed on the basis of criteria that permit the users to appreciate the value of collaboration with their fellow workers. For each criterion, a numerical scale of values is put forward, followed by a space for key words. You should choose one of the values that best corresponds to your perception and your assessment. On the basis of the results of the individual forms, the users then engage in a discussion that will further their understanding of and improve the collaboration among them.

### ***Individual analysis and working in pairs***

The analysis of collaboration starts with self-analysis (individual) by each user. The individual works alone to choose numerical values for the scale, taking this time to reflect on his- or herself. For each criterion, the individuals choose examples or illustrations

from the recent past that permit them to develop their points of view on their collaboration with one or more people. The individuals express this point of view using a number on the sliding scale. On the same line of the form, they write down the key words that help them remember the examples or illustrations on which they base their evaluation. Then they try to find the effect of this criterion (following the numerical value they have chosen for it) on the quality of the work. They then identify necessary changes to improving the quality of the common work. Lastly, they discuss their findings with their colleague, supervisor or collaborator who will have done the same exercise.

### ***Analysis by working groups (within services, enterprises, etc)***

For analysis in working groups, the participants start with an individual analysis (as above). Filling out this form as a group can distort results because groups tend to follow the opinions of dominant members or to simply adopt the first opinions that are offered. So it is important for individuals to choose the values individually before starting to work in groups where their discussions will lead to a consensus.

### ***Results***

Each individual analysis should lead to the identification of useful changes that should be made to improve the quality of the work. The participants should make commitments to make these changes and to set up future times to meet and re-examine their collaboration.

Collaboration between						
Date:						
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Scale</b>					<b>Key Words</b>
	<i>Less good to very good</i>					
<b>Effectiveness</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
Support in implementing activities						
Building capacities (individual, professional, social)						
Capitalizing on work (lessons learned, best practices, success stories)						
Elaboration and setting up of useful rules and procedures						
<b>External relations</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
Negotiating and monitoring useful contacts						
Giving value and visibility to achievements						
Managing visitors (expatriate staff)						
<b>Work relations and ambiance</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
Open to dialogue						
Ability to listen						
Commitment / attitude of solidarity						
Conscious of own limits						
<b>Innovative potential</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
Conceiving new ideas						
Defining and elaborating the vision						
<b>Security of personnel</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
Vigilance about changes in context						
Communication with colleagues						
Next meeting(s) scheduled for:						

## Methodological supplement and other uses of the scale

Self-analysis of collaboration with colleagues indicates an ideal of know-how when it comes to working and getting along together. This ideal depends on personal and professional qualities of the participant and takes into account the context in which he or she is working. There is always a risk that an individual will hide behind the pretexts of that context or intercultural issues to explain observed weaknesses in his or her collaboration with others. A balanced analysis of the collaboration between and among colleagues demands courage, independence of spirit and sound judgement.

The criteria offered on the scale can be modified or substituted to reflect major factors that influence the collaboration among the various people involved. Some criteria may need more attention than others.

In choosing a particular number on the scale, each person indicates what he or she thinks about that criterion relative to the collaborative effort being analyzed. This is a subjective decision. The more examples, experiences and cases relevant to that criterion, the more all the elements will be in place to improve the collaboration among the participants or within a team. A space is reserved for recording the key words that will help the individual who has filled the form recall those examples and experiences. It is by putting all of these subjective choices together, followed by discussion of them, that we can start to attain some objectivity.

The analysis scale can also be useful in the following situations:

### ***“Teambuilding” workshop***

The members of a team individually fill out the form with its scale, then discuss how their points of views vary. A fruitful discussion should involve specific facts and cases and also the perceptions and feelings of the team members.

### ***Preparation of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for an external consultation in organizational development***

The scale is used to identify themes to be taken into account during an external consultation on team spirit, leadership, improvement of the organizational culture and any other theme related to the way human relations affect the functioning of an organization. The themes identified help in developing the TOR.

### ***Checklist***

After an external evaluation, the scale can be used to evaluate the themes brought up in the evaluation that relate to collaboration within the organization.

© CPS-Great Lakes/EED, Coordination and Assistance Team



## 11. Emergence of a peace-promoting culture for a better future

In view of all the obstacles, prejudices and misunderstandings, why do we still insist on working together? There are several kinds of answers to that question and we hope that this booklet will inspire others in you. One good response to this question is because when we are ready to learn from each other, doors open, and nothing will ever be the same again:

- We acquire new knowledge, know-how and attitudes.
- We learn to laugh together at our prejudices.
- We transform our preconceived ideas by ridding ourselves of dangerous stereotypes.
- Together we find creative solutions to deal with the virus of deadly identities.
- New hybrid cultures emerge.

We start to discover the wealth where before we saw only obstacles and problems. The worst thing we can do is to close ourselves off inside the straight-jacket of identity. Peace and development in Africa will come by mixing cultures, ideas and peoples and we can all find our own place. The artist Koulsy Lamko, citizen of the world, urges us to contemplate a “itinerant Africanity”, an Africanity that moves, that renews and re-roots itself, refusing to be closed off, fixed, stagnant. As in other cultures, African identities are dynamic. The collaboration within local structures in the field of peace-building would be more effective if colleagues, African or expatriate, work together to find a new path, giving rise to a culture that promotes peace and a better future.



## FOR AN ITINERANT AFRICANITY

Extracts of an interview with Koulsy Lamko

... To define the African today is to confirm that we are human beings, with our cultural heritage and our education, without inclining ourselves to the Western perspective. Obviously, to understand this and to thrive is to accept to live with ostracism that comes from one place or another. Sometimes when we return to Africa, we are regarded as people coming from the West, while the West itself regards us as epiphenomena because we do not conform to their expectations of us.

Identity is not an origin or a beginning; it is first and foremost deeply rooted in each person's own life experience. I am originally from Chad; however when I say that to people they think that I am a naturalized French man. (...) It's not one's birth that makes the culture; I was born in a small village in Chad. But my culture is not limited to that small village. I've lived in Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, in Togo where I have my family, in France and more specifically in the region of Limousin where I shared many profound experiences with the people, and now I live in Rwanda. The African that I am today inherits all of that, all of those cultures.

*What connects you to the black artist?*

That question is a bit complex because there are two levels. On the ideological level, that connection is very important. Blacks around the world live with ostracism, difficult economic and political situations, we are oppressed and there is the solidarity of the oppressed, to which I lay claim. There is a struggle to exist, a battle to fight that connects us. It is sometimes necessary to close ranks ...

*Do you think there is something specifically African in terms of creativity?*

I think that's a Western fantasy and I lash out often against that

idea. I get very angry when someone speaks to me of “African theatre”. It is this notion of this kind of essential Negritude that was used to justify the slave-trade and colonization. This is awful in an age when we speak all the time of globalization. It stems from Western fears. It would seem that it’s necessary to uphold this difference and keep a wall in place so that people feel safe. It’s this same fear that leads them to refuse to grant visas to Africans, and this translates into other fears: fear of being invaded on the human or economic fronts, and also fear of being invaded by ideas and thoughts that come from elsewhere . . .

*There are, nevertheless, movements based on Negritude.*

Negritude in context had a reason for being. Those whom we counted on to take control of African destiny were carrying the hopes of peoples who had emerged from forced labour, and confronted with the political void, they had to react. But we cannot deny the evolution of the world and the dialectical phenomena inherent in that evolving world. Otherwise it would mean that in Africa nothing changes, that we should be constrained to remain right where we were and as we were, in the same circle. Everything in the world changes, but there are those who would like us to keep going in the same circle or in a downward spiral. That is another form of colonization. It’s against this containment and confinement that we are fighting. If our generation is a bit of the “itinerant” it’s probably because we don’t want to be enclosed; we could go to Lebanon to talk about Lebanon, we could leave Chad to go and work in Canada, or in the region of Limousin in France. For us this is a way to resist. And the African identity today is this itinerancy, this quest, even this questioning of identity . . .

*INTERVIEW DONE BY SYLVIE CHALAYE AVIGNON,  
19 July 2001. AFRICULTURES No 41, see: [www.africultures.com](http://www.africultures.com)*

And so, in this globalized world of today do we really have a choice? The individual alone on his little island with his rights and his responsibilities, the symbolic image of the West, is no longer the centre of the world. Today the world and its communities have become one; we are visible to each other and we should learn to live together in a responsible way. The Other exists, whether we like it or not. And the Other has a name and a tangible presence in our daily lives. In an article in 2007<sup>3</sup> where he judges the “francophonie”, the Cameroonian researcher Achille Mbembe illuminates the way forward:

“... as much as the fate of the world is being determined, at the start of the twenty-first century, around the figure of the individual endowed with rights independent from virtues such as social status, as much as the future of the world will depend on the answers we will come up with for the questions: **who is my fellow human how should I treat the enemy and what should I do about the foreigner ...**

Whether we like it or not, the situation today and in the future is such that the appearance of strangers in the midst of our communal lives and our culture **will never again be anonymous**. The inevitable appearance of third parties among us means we are condemned **to learn to live exposed to each other.**”

But let's not fall into the trap that would make us want to deny or ignore our distinctiveness, to pretend that we are all the same. If we work as Europeans in Africa we have to state loudly and clearly our origins, which are our anchorage and all that it affords us. If we collaborate as Africans with people of other cultures, there is room to acknowledge all that makes us distinct, and to be proud of our roots.

**Accepting our differences** is not a moral obligation: it's a necessity if we are to live together in peace. “In effect, what is the era of globalization if it is not to proclaim freely all that makes us distinct — **the recognition of that which, in the world we all share, makes me different**

<sup>3</sup>Achille Mbembe, Francophonie et politique du Monde, *La Nouvelle Expression*, November 2007, see also: [www.congopage.com/article4594.html](http://www.congopage.com/article4594.html)

**from others?** And in doing so, one could propose that the recognition of that difference by others is exactly the way in which I can make myself the same as them. Thus it would seem, in the end, that the sharing of one's distinctiveness is exactly the prerequisite for a politics of the similar and a world politics." (*Mbembe, Ibid*)

And yet, what Mbembe calls the politics of the similar demands not only that we recognize ourselves in our specificity, but also that we recognize the Other in his or her difference and that we work to find a way to live together in this place we call the world. We should therefore be able to **communicate** and **share**. That is what defines us as citizens of the world, what makes us human.

Let's work towards better communication and sharing. To be committed to the same objectives in the Civil Peace Services affords us the opportunity to define, together, where we want to be tomorrow and to share that vision with others.

Let's seize this opportunity!

*Kinshasa, Bafoussam, Berlin*  
*February 2008-06-23*

# ANNEX

## **Africa as the world views it: Binyavanga Wainaina, *How to Write about Africa.***

*Granta 92, Winter 2005. pp 91-96*

This satirical article by the Kenyan writer, Binyavanga Wainaina, brings us face-to-face with clichés about Africa and Africans:

“Always use the word ‘Africa’ or ‘Darkness’ or ‘Safari’ in your title. Sub-titles may include the words ‘Zanzibar’, ‘Masai’, ‘Zulu’, ‘Zambezi’, ‘Congo’, ‘Nile’, ‘Big’, ‘Sky’, ‘Shadow’, ‘Drum’, ‘Sun’ or ‘Bygone’. Also useful are words such as ‘Guerrillas’, ‘Timeless’, ‘Primordial’ and ‘Tribal’. Note that ‘People’ means Africans who are not black, while ‘The People’ means black Africans.

Never have a picture of a well-adjusted African on the cover of your book, or in it, unless that African has won the Nobel Prize. An AK-47, prominent ribs, naked breasts: use these. If you must include an African, make sure you get one in Masai or Zulu or Dogon dress.

In your text, treat Africa as if it were one country. It is hot and dusty with rolling grasslands and huge herds of animals and tall, thin people who are starving. Or it is hot and steamy with very short people who eat primates. Don’t get bogged down with precise descriptions. Africa is big: fifty-four countries, 900 million people who are too busy starving and dying and warring and emigrating to read your book. The continent is full of deserts, jungles, highlands, savannahs and many other things, but your reader doesn’t care about all that, so keep your descriptions romantic and evocative and unparticular.

Make sure you show how Africans have music and rhythm deep in

their souls, and eat things no other humans eat. Do not mention rice and beef and wheat; monkey-brain is an African's cuisine of choice, along with goat, snake, worms and grubs and all manner of game meat. Make sure you show that you are able to eat such food without flinching, and describe how you learn to enjoy it — because you care.

Taboo subjects: ordinary domestic scenes, love between Africans (unless a death is involved), references to African writers or intellectuals, mention of school-going children who are not suffering from yaws or Ebola fever or female genital mutilation.

Throughout the book, adopt a *sotto* voice, in conspiracy with the reader, and a sad *I-expected-so-much* tone. Establish early on that your liberalism is impeccable, and mention near the beginning how much you love Africa, how you fell in love with the place and can't live without her. Africa is the only continent you can love — take advantage of this. If you are a man, thrust yourself into her warm virgin forests. If you are a woman, treat Africa as a man who wears a bush jacket and disappears off into the sunset. Africa is to be pitied, worshipped or dominated. Whichever angle you take, be sure to leave the strong impression that without your intervention and your important book, Africa is doomed.

Your African characters may include naked warriors, loyal servants, diviners and seers, ancient wise men living in hermitic splendour. Or corrupt politicians, inept polygamous travel-guides, and prostitutes you have slept with. The Loyal Servant always behaves like a seven-year-old and needs a firm hand; he is scared of snakes, good with children, and always involving you in his complex domestic dramas. The Ancient Wise Man always comes from a noble tribe (not the money-grubbing tribes like the Gikuyu, the Igbo or the Shona). He has rheumy eyes and is close to the Earth. The Modern African is a fat man who steals and works in the visa office, refusing to give work permits to qualified Westerners who really care about Africa. He is an enemy of development, always using his government job to make it difficult for pragmatic and good-hearted expats to set up NGOs or Legal Conservation Areas. Or

he is an Oxford-educated intellectual turned serial-killing politician in a Savile Row suit. He is a cannibal who likes Cristal champagne, and his mother is a rich witch-doctor who really runs the country.

Among your characters you must always include The Starving African, who wanders the refugee camp nearly naked, and waits for the benevolence of the West. Her children have flies on their eyelids and pot bellies, and her breasts are flat and empty. She must look utterly helpless. She can have no past, no history; such diversions ruin the dramatic moment. Moans are good. She must never say anything about herself in the dialogue except to speak of her (unspeakable) suffering. Also be sure to include a warm and motherly woman who has a rolling laugh and who is concerned for your well-being. Just call her Mama. Her children are all delinquent. These characters should buzz around your main hero, making him look good. Your hero can teach them, bathe them, feed them; he carries lots of babies and has seen Death. Your hero is you (if reportage), or a beautiful, tragic international celebrity/aristocrat who now cares for animals (if fiction).

Bad Western characters may include children of Tory cabinet ministers, Afrikaners, employees of the World Bank. When talking about exploitation by foreigners mention the Chinese and Indian traders. Blame the West for Africa's situation. But do not be too specific.

Broad brushstrokes throughout are good. Avoid having the African characters laugh, or struggle to educate their kids, or just make do in mundane circumstances. Have them illuminate something about Europe or America in Africa. African characters should be colourful, exotic, larger than life — but empty inside, with no dialogue, no conflicts or resolutions in their stories, no depth or quirks to confuse the cause . . .

Readers will be put off if you don't mention the light in Africa. And sunsets, the African sunset is a must. It is always big and red. There is always a big sky. Wide empty spaces and game are critical — Africa is the Land of Wide Empty Spaces. When writing about the plight of flora and fauna, make sure you mention that Africa is overpopulated. When your main character is in a desert or jungle living with indigenous peo-

ples (anybody short) it is okay to mention that Africa has been severely depopulated by Aids and War (use caps).

You'll also need a nightclub called Tropicana, where mercenaries, evil nouveau riche Africans and prostitutes and guerrillas and expats hang out.

Always end your book with Nelson Mandela saying something about rainbows or renaissances. Because you care.”



## **Partners of the Civil Peace Services (CPS)/EED in the Mano River Region and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):**

- **CCEF (Congolese Centre for the Child and Family;  
Centre Congolais de l'Enfant et de la Famille)**  
Kinshasa – Gombe, DR Congo  
Email: masiala1@yahoo.fr
  
- **CEFORMAD (Centre for Management Training and Organiza-  
tional Development; Centre de Formation en Management et  
Développement Organisationnel)**  
Gombe – Kinshasa, DR Congo  
Email: ceformad@ic.cd  
www.crafod.org
  
- **HEAL Africa**  
Nord Kivu, Goma, DR Congo  
Email: healafrica.lyp@gmail.com  
www.healafrica.org
  
- **RIO (Network for Organizational Innovation;  
Réseau d'Innovation Organisationnelle)**  
Email: riobukavu@yahoo.fr, riobukavu@hotmail.com  
www.riobukavu.org
  
- **SADRI (Support Service for Integrated Regional Development;  
Service d'Appui au Développement Régional Intégré)**  
Lubumbashi, DR Congo  
Email: eccadri@yahoo.fr