



# VOICES ACROSS BORDERS

Policymakers and diasporas in the UK  
working for peace and development

Lucy Holdaway, Hen Wilkinson, Phil Champain and Paul Hoggett

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## Research partners



## About the research team

This research was carried out by: Abdul Rahim and Sam Tedcastle – Centre for Good Relations; Olau Thomassen, Sarah Shaw, M. Kamran Rashid and Ben Mussanzi wa Mussangu – Community Accord; Hen Wilkinson – Community Resolve; Tanya Hubbard, Beverley Martin, Marie Godin, Odia Wabenga and Thanges Paramsothy – Conflict and Change; Lucy Holdaway and Phil Champain – International Alert; and Paul Hoggett – University of the West of England.

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## Acronyms

DEVCO	Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid
DFID	Department for International Development
EEAS	European External Action Service
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
MEP	Member of European Parliament
ONS	Office for National Statistics



## Executive summary



This report aims to deepen understanding of diaspora communities in the UK and improve partnerships between diasporas and policymakers on peacebuilding and development policy and practice.

It explores how the experience of diasporas in the UK is affected by conflict in their countries of origin, the nature of their continuing connections with these countries, and their perceptions and mobilisation around international engagement on development and peacebuilding processes. The report is based on the outcomes of focus group discussions and interviews with members of the Congolese, Pakistani, Somali and Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas together with interviews with desk officers in the EU and UK governments.

### Experiences of diasporas

The diasporas we interviewed maintained strong connections, practical and emotional, to their country of origin. The legacy of leaving, particularly for those experiencing an abrupt departure because of conflict, left scars of dislocation and loss. Dealing with this as individuals and within families and communities was often presented as an ongoing challenge and one that in some cases led to inter-generational conflict and community tension. For many participants, this legacy of trauma continues to affect their ability to rebuild their lives in a country of safety. For others, it means that life is still not safe even in the UK. Dynamics within, and hostility and tensions between, communities, together with the targeting of some communities as potential state security risks, have all become part of the legacy of leaving the country of origin and affect diasporas' sense of belonging to the UK.

Connections between diaspora members and their country of origin on the whole remain strong throughout the generations. Relationships with family and communities “back home”, fuelled by concern for family members, ongoing financial support and business interests, ensure that life overseas is as much a part of daily life as other aspects of life in the UK. Widespread use of the internet, Facebook and mobile phones for news and contact offers the opportunity for both positive and negative interactions. It provides unprecedented levels of communication, both personal and political, through instant access to, and flow of, information between countries. However, it also has negative repercussions, communicating in minutes conflicts from one part of the globe to another – which, on occasion, has facilitated the violent replaying of neighbourhood disputes “back home” on the streets in England. Political lines of connection remain visible. In some cases, political involvement by diasporas in their country of origin is extremely strong. For example, in the case of the Transitional Government of Somalia, which has four members who are British passport holders. In other cases, the culture and practice of politics is integrated into life in the UK, with lines of influence and allegiance in the country of origin mirrored in local politics in the UK.

### Engagement on peacebuilding and development

International engagement with the country of origin was, on the whole, viewed with cynicism by the diaspora. It was perceived as being driven by self-interest on the part of the international community, whether that be jobs in the aid industry or political or investment opportunities for governments.

Yet diaspora members also spoke of the opportunity that engaging with government could present. The power and influence of the UK and EU governments was recognised as a force that, if interests are shared, could be harnessed for improving sustainable opportunities for peace and development in the country of origin.

Engagement is not without its complications. The different, sometimes competing, agendas of diaspora communities and the UK and EU governments, coupled with poor levels of awareness around priorities and agendas of the different parties at the table, have made the relationship between diasporas and government somewhat challenging. This is compounded by very different cultures of engagement. Working with diaspora groups from a variety of political cultures leads to unfamiliar modes of engagement and styles of lobbying. Similarly, for the diasporas, the British civil servant presents quite a different face to what they are used to. Finding compatibility and understanding in this is a challenge that needs to be addressed to ensure more effective working relationships.

Underpinning engagement is a set of assumptions that both the desk officer and the diaspora bring to the table. Assumptions about what each other can and can't do, the value and purpose of the engagement, and the risks and benefits this brings. Assumptions are influenced by wider societal stereotypes associated with both the diaspora community and international involvement overseas. This is complicated by the focus of single communities as security threats. The experiences that diasporas have domestically have an impact on their trust of, and ability to engage with, government authorities. Similarly, seeing the diaspora through a security lens changes the nature and purpose of engagement by the government with diasporas, infusing it with underlying suspicion of the community.

Interaction with diasporas has most often been led by single teams within government. There was little evidence of coordination of knowledge, information and approaches between teams or government departments. This restricts learning from experiences of engagement and improving on this. It also fails to take into account the holistic nature of the diaspora experience; interactions, influences and challenges domestically (whether housing or security) are part of the same "diaspora continuum" that extends to interests overseas.

Currently, engagement on peacebuilding and development is done *to*, rather than *with*, diasporas. The diaspora and the desk officer see each other as potential lobbyists, information sources and investment opportunities, but rarely as partners in improving conditions overseas. This needs to change and a partnership approach adopted if all parties are to fulfil their self-declared mandate of improving conflict and development overseas.

## Conclusions and recommendations

This report demonstrates the immediacy of impact that events in the country of origin have on life in the UK for diaspora communities. It also highlights the lines of influence and interaction between these communities and the country of origin. The conventional borders that demarcate our sense of place, belonging and engagement do not apply to these communities. Being able to both understand and engage with the complexity of the diaspora experience is key to maximising the opportunities evident in building processes for better practice overseas.

The interviews conducted with diaspora members highlighted ongoing interest, concern and anxiety related to these contexts. This intersects to differing degrees with policymakers who have a responsibility for international engagement in the countries concerned. If at the basis of their engagement is a concern for improving the impact of peacebuilding and development interventions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Pakistan, Somalia and Sri Lanka, then seeking collaboration offers the opportunity to utilise knowledge, skills and experience. Such collaboration can deepen the impact of interventions for both groups. The following recommendations are made to support this:

### For policymakers:

- Map and analyse the different diaspora groups, their agendas and relationships with their country of origin in order to be able to establish appropriate partnerships with individuals and groups;
- Better utilise and analyse existing information within and outside of government to improve understanding and build a case for partnership with diasporas; and
- Collaborate across government to assess the impact that both domestic and foreign policy have on the diaspora experience and the implications of this for peacebuilding and development.

### For the diaspora member:

- Strengthen ways of presenting the diversity of diaspora interests and needs so that policymakers can more easily engage;
- Seek to better understand the policies and priorities of the UK and EU governments in order to identify the fit with diaspora priorities; and
- Engage on peace and development interventions in regions that have the greatest need in addition to places with personal connections.



# 1. Introduction



## 1.1 Why this report

This report aims to deepen understanding of diaspora communities in the UK and improve partnerships between diasporas and policymakers on peacebuilding and development policy and practice.

Drawing on the experiences of those living in the Congolese, Pakistani, Somali and Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora communities, the report explores:

- The impact of external conflicts on these communities;
- Their current responses to conflicts in their countries of origin;
- Their aspirations for how they could contribute to development and peacebuilding processes; and
- How engaging with diasporas can help inform and improve the foreign and development policies of the UK government and the EU.

The conflict dynamics in these communities' countries of origin are extensively written about and we do not attempt to explain them here. Instead, this report focuses on: the lives of those affected by these conflicts and now living in the UK; the impact that this experience has on daily life in the UK; their relationships within their communities; and how they identify with their countries of origin. This holds significance for policymakers tasked with shaping the nature of international engagement with conflict-affected countries. The report therefore also reflects the views of different desk officers within government and the nature of engagement between these desk officers and diaspora groups.

The content is based on the outcomes of focus group discussions, interviews, and a survey with members of the four diaspora communities, together with interviews with desk officers in the EU and UK governments.

We will take this report back to those interviewed in the diaspora communities and the UK and EU governments as a stimulus for further discussion and dialogue. Through these discussions, we aim to deepen understanding of diaspora communities and improve partnerships between diasporas and policymakers on peacebuilding and development policy and practice.

### A note on terminology

People use a variety of terms to refer to concepts relating to the diaspora. We have tried to set out a clear list of the terms we will use throughout this report. We use them with the caveat that they can often be imbued with political meaning and that none of them is neutral.

**Community:** Used to describe a group with a common country background, e.g. Pakistani. It is not reflective of any other assumed homogeneity.

**Country of heritage:** More commonly used by second- or third-generation diaspora members who have direct family links to their country of origin.

**Country of origin:** Used to describe either the country of one's birth or one's parents' or grandparents' birth. For the purposes of this report, we use the term "country of origin" to cover all variations.

**Diaspora:** Used to denote a recognisable group that has settled away from its ancestral home. Qualities that distinguish the diaspora include political ties with their homeland, thoughts of return and relationships with other communities in the diaspora.

**Home:** Used to describe country of heritage, ancestral home, country of origin and homeland.

**Host country:** Used to refer to the country of residence – in this case, the UK.

## 1.2 Methodology

The research sought to compare the experiences of different diaspora communities in the UK, while also recognising that these communities are not themselves homogenous. We endeavoured to strike a balance between sampling different geographical concentrations of the same diaspora community and comparing different diasporas. The research was conducted in the following areas and with the following communities:

- Congolese diaspora in London and Bradford;
- Pakistani diaspora in Bradford and Brierfield;
- Somali diaspora in Salford, Manchester; and
- Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Newham, London.

Overall, 11 focus groups and 21 key informant interviews were held, involving 80 respondents across the four communities. Of this, 43% were female and 57% male. A questionnaire was circulated in the research areas and more broadly for completion by diaspora members not participating in the focus groups or interviews. We received 296 completed responses from these four communities, of which 41% were female and 59% male.

In conjunction with this, we conducted interviews with 17 desk officers in the UK and EU governments. These individuals were identified because of their specialist country or diaspora knowledge of the four countries of origin.

All interviews and group discussions were recorded (digitally or in written form) and partially transcribed. Transcription and analysis was guided by the research aims.

## 1.3 Challenges and limitations

The research was bounded in its scope by the limits of time and resources, which contributed to the challenges described below. As such, we do not pretend to offer a definitive study. Notwithstanding the provisos set out below, we are confident that the data presented provides some novel, rich and valuable insights relevant to the aims of the research. In addition, the provisos indicate important areas for future research.

**Community selection:** Selection of the diaspora communities was based on: (i) links to a country in continuing conflict; (ii) the diaspora's continuing engagement with that country; and (iii) research partners' existing access to communities in their locality. As a result, the selection interviewed is a *snapshot* of a particular community in a particular location. It cannot be taken as representative of all perspectives from these communities.

**Community access:** Working with local voluntary organisations as research partners enabled us to have links and trust with the four communities chosen. This was critical to building relationships around this research and being able to gather the depth of information. In the case of Bradford and London, community members working alongside the research partners built trust and facilitated access to the communities. In Manchester and Brierfield, the research partners conducted the interviews and focus groups themselves. While this approach enabled more effective access than conventional researchers would have had, we still encountered four specific difficulties:

- a. It proved extremely difficult to engage Sri Lankan Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims in the same group discussion. This, coupled with the Sri Lankan demography in Newham (which is predominantly Tamil) where the research was conducted, resulted in the sample consisting of members of the Tamil community only.

- b. The result of the Congolese elections in November 2011 led to widespread demoralisation within much of the Congolese diaspora in the UK. As a result, this community was harder to engage than expected.
- c. Female community members, particularly within Muslim communities, were reluctant to engage with male researchers. Where possible, we offered female researchers. However, fear of their discussion having repercussions within their communities held back their participation.
- d. Our researchers had to overcome mistrust of the process and purpose of the research, particularly from the Pakistani and Somali men who had significant fears that the data would be used for domestic security purposes. Even in the cases where the researchers were known to the community, the history of targeting this community under agendas such as Prevent<sup>1</sup> had led to an erosion of trust in external organisations.

**Working with community organisations as research partners:** Research partners were community organisations selected on the strength of their links with communities rather than being trained researchers. Back-up for the researchers via a “research support pack” and two full days’ training plus close monitoring of progress was effective. However, this approach also generated some difficulties. Small local voluntary organisations during a period of public expenditure cuts faced much uncertainty and financial and staff turbulence, providing greater challenges to undertaking time- and labour-intensive research.

**Gender balance:** We endeavoured to get equal participation of men and women in our focus groups and interviews. This had various levels of success. In addition to the above issues of gender and security, we experienced a degree of reluctance by some women to participate due to fears of how this would be reported in their communities. This accounts for a gender disparity in some of the case studies.

**UK and EU focus:** The research specifically focused on desk officers in the UK and EU. It did not attempt to contact counterparts in the British High Commissions or European Commissions in Kinshasa, Islamabad, Nairobi (for Somalia) or Colombo. The policy engagement approach is therefore limited to a Brussels- and UK-based perspective and does not attempt to comment on types of engagement with diasporas from in-country offices.

**Home-host focus:** We kept a specific focus on home-host country without looking *across* other networks, e.g. the relationship between Pakistan and Somalia, or DRC and Rwanda. This inevitably carries limitations, as a number of dynamics discussed have far wider regional and global implications. For example, Congolese respondents would discuss dynamics in the wider Great Lakes region, while Somali respondents would talk about wider dynamics affecting other Muslim countries.

## 1.4 Report structure

We begin with the stories of the Congolese, Pakistanis, Somalis and Sri Lankan Tamils with whom we spoke. They paint a picture of the nature of these particular diaspora communities in the UK, the nature of the connection between the UK and their country of origin, and the level of engagement with government. The case studies are followed by a section exploring the relationship between policymakers and diasporas around peacebuilding and development. This section is built on interviews held with policymakers in the UK government and EU and seeks to assess motivations for engagement, approaches to this engagement and implications for peacebuilding and development. We end with recommendations for both the diaspora community and the policymaking community.

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<sup>1</sup> The Prevent Strategy is the preventative strand of the UK government’s domestic counter-terrorism strategy.



## 2. The diaspora experience – a shared struggle



This section offers a case study on each of the four diaspora communities: the Congolese, Pakistani, Somali and Sri Lankan Tamil, using their words to illustrate their experiences in the UK and their continuing connections with their country of origin. While these diaspora communities come from very different backgrounds, they shared a number of common experiences. The main commonalities are: the **legacy of leaving** their home country with the devastating impact of losing family and culture that entails; the experience of living a life where their ongoing **connections with their country of origin** are as much a part of daily patterns as is life in the UK; and a **disillusionment with the international engagement** of other countries in politics and development “back home”.

### Legacy of leaving

This study turned up a profusion of stories about the confusing impact on sense of self and belonging that participants had experienced as a result of moving to the UK.

Among the newer arrivals, loss and dislocation was repeatedly expressed, related to exile from their country of origin and their families. Challenges of integration into UK society included a lack of opportunity for work and progression; language barriers; a completely new cultural framework and understanding, from food to values; a lack of trust of both their own community members and the mainstream, and rivalries within the diaspora, and with other minority groups living in the UK.

For all communities, anxiety about losing their culture has generated conflicts between generations. These internal family and community conflicts are significant, and are illustrated in this study through stories of shifting gender and parenting roles, traditional power and discipline hierarchies in flux, and children that are more fluent in English than they are in their parents’ mother tongue. In this world, young people become interpreters for their elders, and women go out to work for the first time with impacts on marriages and child–parent relationships. For Congolese women, in particular, there were stories of how embracing a campaigning role around sexual and cultural violence against women has led to family frictions and breakdown. For the women, this role of rebuilding the community and addressing sexual violence provides a constructive channel for their despair and loneliness.

The impact of conflict and violence in countries of origin is clearly felt by those within the diaspora communities we spoke to. Many participants spoke of ongoing trauma due to their personal experience of conflict or out of deep concern for family and friends left behind. This is carried silently among the wider community and, in some cases, remained taboo within families.

86% of respondents cited conflict as the main difficulty affecting their community “back home” with 75% saying this affected their lives in the UK. (Survey Q15)

British government policy, both foreign and domestic, has also been shaped by these conflicts and by the wider post-9/11 context. The “War on Terror”, in particular, was referred to as having radically altered relations between Muslim and non-Muslim communities globally and affecting both public and institutional attitudes towards participants.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Polls show that interrelated issues of external security (e.g. terrorism) and internal security (e.g. crime) became far more prominent public opinion concerns after 9/11. There also emerged significant levels of public anxiety over immigration, and the presence and integration of Muslim communities. Ten years on, governments and political elites have barely begun to understand this trend, and its implications. See: M. Goodwin. ‘9/11 ten years on: European public attitudes and party politics’, Chatham House, 1st September 2011. Available at <http://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/177923>

## Connections with their country of origin

Connection with their country of origin was strong among all participants. Communities talked poignantly of the struggle to stay in touch with their families in war zones, or who had been dispersed across the globe. By far the most significant reasons for connection we came across were immediate concerns for safety, staying in more regular contact with families and financial support. Social media and new technologies play an enormous part in maintaining contact, through mobile phones, the web and television. These technologies were described as having both benefits – easy to stay in touch – and drawbacks. For example, Somalis spoke of the propaganda shown on television both on UK and Somali channels, which promotes only negative imagery of their country and exacerbates anxieties about the dangers of visiting relatives. Pakistanis spoke of how local clan-based conflicts within Pakistan or the UK could quickly escalate to include people on either continent in the blink of an eye – “real time” – thanks to social media and mobile phones.

83% of respondents kept in touch with events “back home” by phone; 58% via television and the internet; and 51% cited Facebook as a regular form of contact. (Survey Q12)

Many participants spoke of the occasional burden of staying in such regular contact, mostly related to their feelings of financial responsibility for those left behind. They described the poverty they lived in created by sending a large proportion of their income overseas to support others and the conflict this generated within families.

When asked about connections to their overseas community, 45% identified financial support as their main form of connection. (Survey Q10)

The expectation of financial support was often as true for new arrivals as it was for long-established families, who were still required to contribute to weddings, education and general life costs, even when relatives back home were wealthier.

Distinct strands of cultural and religious connection linked diaspora groups and their countries of origin. In DRC, for example, music plays an important role as a vehicle for passing on news, for celebration or for mourning. Faith connections, whether through church, temple or mosque, provide a significant and, in some cases, pivotal link between the separated diaspora and “home” communities.

A further significant area of cross-over and connection came around local and overseas politics. A number of those we interviewed spoke of the impact of overseas politics on their lives in the UK. For example, Pakistani participants spoke of the “biraderi” – meaning kinship or caste – influence, discussing the clear links between political life in Pakistan and the UK. Voting patterns, leaderships and voice were cited as a mirror image of political dynamics in the regions they came from. Similarly, a number of Somali participants gave examples of those in the UK continuing to play an active and influential part in Somali politics both among the Somali diaspora and in Somalia.

Respondents generally kept in close touch with politics in their countries of origin. The political nature of business and property interests were discussed in the Congolese, Pakistani and Somali case studies, with business interests crossing the UK/country of origin borders and being cited as providing political influence “back home”.

78% preferred direct personal action such as sending money; 57% fundraised more broadly; and 35% lobbied for political support. (Survey Q17)

## International engagement

Within all of the diaspora communities we spoke to, we heard repeated expressions of frustration at the perceived lack of international community action to address the internal conflicts in their countries of origin. In particular, there is resentment at the extent to which self-interest of the UK and international community is perceived as shaping their involvement in these countries. Involvement is seen to be determined by geo-political interests, aid and access to resources. This perceived double standard has a continuing corrosive effect on the trust between some of the diaspora communities and governments.

## 2.1 Congolese community

### Introduction

Our research focused on Congolese diaspora members in London (mainly Newham) and Bradford. The migration of Congolese people to the UK is relatively recent, with the first wave starting in the late 1980s (the last years of President Mobutu's reign) and early 1990s and the second occurring in the late 1990s (the beginning of the war in the East). The Office for National Statistics (ONS) places the Congolese-born population at 20,000 at the end of 2011.<sup>3</sup> However, this doesn't account for births in the UK. Community leaders provide higher estimates of around 30,000–40,000.<sup>4</sup> The Congolese participants in this research had originally come from Uvira and Bukavu (in South Kivu Province), Bandundu, Ituri in Orientale Province, Bas-Congo, Kasai and Kinshasa.

### Legacies of leaving DRC

A number of those we interviewed left DRC because of conflict – 'somewhere somehow, because of a problem'. Dealing with this legacy continues to have a profound effect on our respondents:

*'I left my child when he was five years old. I came here in 2003... Now he is 13 years old. When that thought crosses my mind it affects me a lot... If the country was fine, we would have never [thought] about leaving our country.'*

This is manifested in a combination of pressure, stress and poverty for the individual: 'the conflict on Congo is affecting me psychologically and mentally, financially and materially.' Despite this strain, respondents told us that the reasons for leaving are rarely spoken about among families, creating a veil of secrecy around what happened in DRC and the continuing impacts this has on individuals in the UK:

*'In our household a lot of the time those things are taboos. We don't talk about those things because people lived through a real-life situation that's like nothing off a movie... that was someone actually shooting at your mum, your cousin, your auntie, you know?'*

An older community member indicated that this silence contributed to inter-generational tension, with the younger generation unable to understand the experiences of their families and so blaming parents and/or grandparents for fleeing the Congo rather than standing up to the government:

*'In my view, a young person who blames their parents for fleeing the war is just showing their ignorance of what the war is... A young person who has experienced the brutal Congo war – even as a child – will never blame their parents for fleeing to save their life as a family. Never!'*

<sup>3</sup> ONS (2012). *Population by country of birth and nationality report August 2012*. Newport. p.13. Available at [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_277619.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_277619.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Demographic data and phases of migration are drawn from: International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2006). *DR Congo. Mapping exercise*. London.

Younger diaspora members themselves spoke of their sadness at not having the freedom or safety to visit their country of heritage unlike the younger generation from other places. They acknowledged that the move to Europe gave those Congolese born or raised here greater opportunities, such as the chance of a better education, but it also carried the cost of a loss of connection to their “home”.

A continuing legacy of the conflict is the scale and degree of sexual violence against Congolese women and girls in the Congo by men from neighbouring countries, as well as by Congolese men. This was a major concern for participants, and especially the women, who spoke of how rape – used as a tool of war – destroys the women and their communities, with the statistic given of ‘a woman/girl raped every 8 minutes for the last 16 years’. For those we interviewed, the purpose of rape was to destroy women and girls in ways that unravel the fundamental community infrastructure of the Congolese people. The psychological injury of rape is not easily healed and the trauma of these experiences has continued to affect a number of the women we interviewed. Incidences were discussed of how sexual violence has continued within the community even within the safety of the UK, placing many women under both physical and psychological stress:

*‘Imagine you’re punching a brick wall and then it’s getting through then it covers up again, I think that’s what’s happened so many times and people are frustrated, their sense of hope is lost, their sense of direction is lost, you know? They’re just absolutely in almost a chaotic state in terms of mentality.’*

An avenue out of this for some was through campaigning on the situation for women in DRC. One woman discussed her role in this, but described how the choices she felt compelled to make created deep tension within her family. She told us that the birth of her grandchild coincided with the day of a protest she was leading. She chose to attend the protest over being with her daughter and new grandchild, which resulted in great tension in her family, who were unable to recognise or understand the conflict between her competing commitments.

The isolation of being a new arrival in the UK and the legacy of trauma from the war has created barriers to integration, described as poverty, culture, incompatibility of educational background and language. One participant told us, ‘If we were able to speak English that good... we would be further up there, because we certainly do have the heart.’ She continued, ‘Because we don’t speak the language we tend to be at home or we tend to be within our circles.’ Participants expressed particular concern about the isolation from British society experienced by some young Congolese, initially because of language, but then because of a negative cycle of involvement in, or being victims of, crime: ‘For my generation here in London, we’ve seen friends get stabbed and friends going to jail and people getting kidnapped.’

Isolation was compounded by what respondents saw as the complete ignorance of most British people of the conflict and its roots in European colonialism. They felt that they are seen as “scroungers” who have come to the UK purely to benefit from the welfare system. This lack of understanding or empathy generated intense feeling both on a personal and political level grounded in frustration at the perceived lack of interest in the situation in DRC.

As a community, the ability to rise above a certain standard of living has been hampered by the dual financial responsibilities experienced as a diaspora. Participants talked about needing to work long hours to be able to generate enough money to support their families in the UK and abroad, sometimes needing to split their money in several different directions: ‘All the money I get here, it’s as if I live in Kinshasa, although I live in Bradford.’ This has not always been the case: when one family first left the Congo, they still had profitable businesses there and a relatively easy life. Over the last 10 years, the political situation and conflict have forced the end of these businesses:

*‘At the moment as my father died, I have become like the father figure now. I have a very large family. Every end of the months they know that something has to come up. Every day I am affected by it. If I don’t send any money or any instructions for someone to go and get money from one of the tenants they are in troubles. Even before the end of the month they will call you, even just to send \$10 or to remind you of their presence.’*

Family tensions are caused by the demands on finances by relatives back in the Congo, where money is needed for education, healthcare or just to live. Parents spoke of having to negotiate with their children’s requests for new things versus their need to send money home, causing conflicts between husband and wife as well as parents and children. Not everybody is in a position to support their relatives left in DRC; however, the obligation and expectation remain:

*‘If you send money to your own sister and your cousin does not get anything. If she finds out then there’ll be problems. So you must work to send money again to the other person to avoid conflicts in the family.’*

The conflict in the Congo has a big impact on businesses and the ability to do business within the Congo and beyond. ‘Corruption is the only way for survival,’ said one participant, while another spoke of the destroyed infrastructure and financial instability of the country, which means constant inflation and increase of prices on the local DRC markets day by day. This was returned to with incredulity repeatedly, drawing the comparison between DRC’s natural resources and the living conditions of its people:

*‘The semolina cannot be grind. Food is hard to get. If you hear about some story, there’s no electricity, there’s no water. How can people live with no water and electricity? You see how we Congolese are suffering in such a rich country [DRC].’*

Business was also cited as remaining a key tie between the diaspora and DRC:

*‘With commerce and business, the way that functions is that there are some people here who might have 2 stores, but in the Congo they have 20 of them and they do trade and business etc. In terms of family, family never forgets family and you can’t change who will be in your family, but this thing is politically driven, it’s more of a systematic thing, it’s not necessarily within the context of family. It’s more to do with power, positions etc. It’s nothing to do with the family nucleus or anything of that nature. Commerce is possibly one of those things that ties the community together.’*

### Connections between the UK and DRC

The political nature of conflict back in DRC continues to have an impact within communities in the UK, with divisions between the diaspora in the Great Lakes region being mirrored within the communities in the UK. In our survey, 74% of Congolese saw links between events in DRC and differences or conflicts within Congolese communities in the UK. Of these, 87% said this was to do with politics.<sup>5</sup>

Those we interviewed talked about the connection between those in DRC and those in the UK being close, especially for the older generation:

*‘There is an essential bond of Congolese people when they get together. It’s always been there, always will be there... You just know you’re home, you know these people have got your back 110%.’*

5 Survey Q25 and Q26.

However, this is contradicted somewhat by 80% of Congolese surveyed stating that there are differences and/or conflicts with the Congolese community,<sup>6</sup> demonstrating that divisions are felt within and between communities in Britain.

The need to have real-time connection to DRC was very evident, with respondents describing constantly calling family members to check for news. They stayed in touch with the political dynamics predominantly through the TV and internet. However, this doesn't always bring comfort, and, in fact, can add to the continuing psychological strain on families:

*'We have TV channel here: Shot One, created by Papa Bony. My wife and I will often go to bed in sadness because of the things we see in the documentaries.'*

*'There's a particular Congolese channel on Sky, they're promoting the businesses, promoting those that are doing good things, people that are putting together barber shops... And I am thankful for the links that they keep between the Congolese community at home, and those over here.'*

The church and music are two other strong connections, with music driving the culture and providing people with a way of forgetting what they have been through, as well as maintaining current links with DRC. However, many Congolese pastors and singers who used to come to the UK no longer come for fear of violence due to being supporters of Kabila. This was seen as a loss for the UK diaspora: 'Now there is only a narrow place in which to live our lives.'

### International engagement on DRC

Many dream of positive change that will allow them to return to DRC, but these dreams "vanish every year", with examples given of intellectuals and researchers ready to go back but discouraged by the actions of the political leadership. Participants talked of the need for spiritual support and prayers to give encouragement, hope and faith to the Congolese people that one day things will change for the better, but also of their nation being "cursed".

In this study, the view was repeatedly expressed that the international community is and has been too uninvolved in the conflict in DRC. The frustration, pain and incomprehension of the continuing conflicts in DRC was evident with the desire that the influence of international organisations, Western governments and multinational companies would be able to change this. Little was known or mentioned about the aid DRC receives<sup>7</sup> or global efforts around human rights violations and mineral extraction.<sup>8</sup> Instead, participants felt isolated in their efforts to promote awareness of what was happening in their country of origin.

There is mobilisation around a voice on DRC in the UK, through campaigning and the establishment of community groups. Respondents talked of using music within their community and among the wider public to mobilise awareness of the situation in DRC. They spoke about one woman, signed with a record label, who uses her own experiences of sexual abuse to campaign for awareness and justice in the Congo. This was linked to other strategies to spread awareness to a wider audience. Demonstrations, campaigns and lobbying through the UK government were all activities creating links and engagement with international policy.

<sup>6</sup> Survey Q22.

<sup>7</sup> DRC was the largest recipient of aid in 2010. Global Humanitarian Assistance website, 'Democratic Republic of Congo', accessed 3rd September 2012. Available at <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/countryprofile/democratic-republic-of-congo>

<sup>8</sup> For example, please see: US Department of State (2011). *2010 human rights report: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Available at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154340.htm>; 'Human cost of mining in DR Congo', *BBC News*, 2nd September 2009. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8234583.stm>; United Nations Office of the High Commission of Human Rights (UNHCR) (2010). 'DRC: Mapping human rights violations 1993-2003'. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AfricaRegion/Pages/RDCProjetMapping.aspx>

## 2.2 Pakistani community

This study talked to individuals from the Pakistani diaspora living in Bradford and in Brierfield and Nelson. The first generation arrived in the North of England in the 1950s and 1960s to work in the steel and textile mills. As they settled, they were joined by spouses and family members. Pakistani migrants continue to arrive in Britain for marriage and family purposes or on student and work permit visas. The ONS estimated the Pakistani population to be 1,007.4 million in mid-2009.<sup>9</sup> However, discussions with community members and officials have placed this figure closer to 1.2 million.

Most of the Pakistani residents in Bradford<sup>10</sup> come from the Northern Punjab and the Mirpur District of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. In Brierfield, the majority of the population originates from the same villages around Jhelum/Gujrat in Pakistan – just 20 miles from the Kashmir ceasefire line.

### Legacies of leaving Pakistan

The Pakistani diaspora community now has several generations settled in the UK. This presents a marked contrast in the nature and degree of connection to “home” that is revealed in the other case studies. Another difference between case studies is the motivations for leaving the country of origin. In this case, the majority of the diaspora left Pakistan for economic rather than conflict reasons. Despite this empathy, concern and connection to “back home” was still strong. While elder community members we talked to felt that the younger generation had less empathy, this was not reflected in our conversations with younger diaspora members. One younger participant, who had never visited, spoke of ‘a real connection, I’m in contact every other day with family who call me’. A second said she based her identity on Pakistan – it was ‘important to have a sense of where you come from’ – and talked of a ‘spiritual connection rather than a physical one’.

Research participants discussed a number of ties between Pakistan and its UK diaspora – through family, land ownership, marriage, status, politics, bigger families, culture (including food), sports and spiritual links. Those with an idea of returning “home” keep a strong connection, including investment in property and active engagement in Pakistan politics – ‘It’s very easy to connect via Skype, via Facebook, all manner of social network. Very occasionally I’ll read the English section of a Pakistani paper.’

One person talked of how people want to return to Pakistan to hold on to status, ‘because here they work in restaurants’. This issue of status recurs repeatedly, suggesting it is a key reason why there is huge interest and involvement among the UK diaspora in local Pakistani politics:

*‘People enter into politics because it’s leverage – landowners will get involved in politics, we have access to levers of control and power.’*

Participants commented in a number of ways on the conservative nature of the diaspora community, giving examples of how their peers in Pakistan have “moved on” culturally, while their own communities in the UK are less liberal. One spoke of how ‘Elders want us to be influenced by Pakistan culture – “a good way it used to be”’; another stressed his British-Pakistani identity, having spent most of his life here. This inter-generational split repeats itself in a number of spheres, as younger Pakistanis forge a “UK” identity and as fluency in languages such as Urdu decreases.

<sup>9</sup> ONS (18th May 2011). *Population estimates by ethnic group 2002–2009*, accessed on 3rd September 2012. Available at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/peeg/population-estimates-by-ethnic-group--experimental--current-estimates/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> Bradford has the largest proportion of its total population (15%) identifying themselves as of Pakistani origin in England. See: The Change Institute (2009). *The Pakistani Muslim community in England: understanding Muslim ethnic communities*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government. p.6.

Negative stories in the UK media on corruption in Pakistan, radicalisation, terrorism and international political dissent have a direct impact on the Pakistani UK diaspora, according to one participant. It is the yardstick that they are measured against, often portraying them through a single lens associated with this perception of Pakistan rather than their lives as both British and Pakistani. This provided extra motivation for wanting Pakistan to “succeed” in order to have a positive impact on the community’s standing in the UK. Another participant, speaking of her concern about a negative focus on the Pakistani diaspora, asked UK authorities:

*‘Not to marginalise communities... extremism and conflict are in all communities and we need to address it as a whole and not focus on just one community. All these problems and issues happen in all communities, Irish, Pakistan, the Blacks, Whites – it’s across all communities.’*

Faith was cited as playing a central role in negotiating challenges faced in the UK. Participants emphasised how great the influence of religion and traditions are on day-to-day lives. Talking about spiritual guidance, one suggested:

*‘They look partly to Pakistan and the Middle East and increasingly the UK, with more and more scholars born here... but there are specialist scholars, for example in Islamic sciences, we don’t have those in the UK so you go globally for that.’*

However, participants spoke of the mismatch between the plurality of local religious practice in the UK – with a number of mosques and denominations and people free to choose how they wish to practise their faith – versus the violence seen internationally in relation to Islam. These misperceptions compounded the sense of being misunderstood by the wider British community and, as a result, fed isolation.

Those from poor backgrounds in Pakistan described an obligation to provide for their family, as the “lucky few” that made it to England. Those “left behind” in Pakistan expected to be financially supported by the diaspora. This included extravagant events such as funerals and weddings, placing an enormous financial burden on their families.

Contrary to this, one participant described how he felt that the expectation was as much from the diaspora members themselves, who remain too concerned with small issues in Pakistan and hold on to these links tightly at the cost of settling themselves in England. Other participants discussed an overall shift in focus from investing back home to building lives in the UK. These contradictory perspectives indicate that the tightness of connection is more complex than length of time out of the country.

The increase of wealth in Pakistan has a significant impact on connection with the diaspora. Whereas in the past the diaspora community felt their contributions meant they should have a say in the way those in Pakistan lived their lives, many people in Pakistan are becoming more materially independent, causing tension between the two communities as the balance of power realigns.

Even so, financial issues that fuel different conflicts in Pakistan continue to be played out in England, for example, tensions around land ownership and marriages. Participants talked about marriages between families in Pakistan and the diaspora being based on a desire to get family members to the UK to benefit those left behind. One participant argued that this has held the community back, affecting their lives in the UK:

*‘Culturally it’s been acceptable for your parents to arrange a marriage with your cousin... a lot of people are beginning to challenge the status quo...’*

In our discussions, issues such as these were described as a motivating factor behind a shift within the younger generation to move away from marriage to Pakistanis from Pakistan and towards marriage in the UK. This may also be a response to marriage without consent:

*‘I think, forced marriages is one issue, it goes against Islam but culturally it seems to be accepted; the rights of women, Muslim women, I think have been denied... of Pakistani women... in terms of education, profession, seeking a partner, just the woman being her own individual personality and allowing her to grow and giving her that space. What too often happens in Pakistani culture is the mother-in-law dictates to the daughter-in-law, who has to do what she’s told.’*

The tension between tradition, culture and expectation was one that came through clearly in our conversations. It was a source of conflict and negotiation between generations with their different experiences and the expectations born out of them. This is supported by our survey in which 47% cited generational difference as a key source of conflict within the community in the UK.<sup>11</sup>

### Connections between the UK and Pakistan

According to participants, there is a direct link between British politics and issues in Pakistan. Most respondents spoke at one point or another of “biraderi politics”, referring to family associations and a culture of kinship brought from Pakistan that has dominated community politics in the UK:

*‘[Biraderi] is very deep rooted in the Pakistani community unfortunately, and politics play a big role in that as well. It’s not what the politician is capable of, it’s because [of] which family he belongs to and what caste he belongs to... which is wrong...’*

Pakistan political parties have a presence here in the UK, and both the Pakistan Muslim League and the Pakistan People’s Party, one of Pakistan’s main political parties, have offices in Bradford. They campaign on both local and Pakistani websites, demonstrating the cross-over in interests. At a local level, Pakistani councillors in the UK are seen as playing Pakistani political games:

*‘There’s a direct impact on what’s going on in the streets. We know biraderi politics operate in Bradford for last 30 years – probably origins in mobilising people, first 10 years a good way of organising people, then became a self-serving system, creating this conformity and elite reinforcing its position. Biraderi politics in Bradford is nothing to do with policies, it’s all to do with status and position.’*

In the survey we conducted, 77% of Pakistani respondents said that there was conflict and/or difference within the Pakistani community in the UK, with 60% citing class/caste as the reason behind this.<sup>12</sup> The influence of biraderi politics has been challenged by the recent by-election in Bradford, where the standing British Pakistani MP lost to Respect candidate George Galloway. It is yet to be seen how far this goes in disrupting the current connections between politics in Pakistan and politics in England. For the time being, though, political links and happenings in Pakistan continue to be played out in England.

Tensions between Kashmiris and Gujeratis in Brierfield are one specific example of ‘politics inherent in Pakistan’ operating in the UK, according to one respondent, which results in much vying for power ‘among the boys’. Back in Pakistan, “Raja” and “Gujjar” families were landowners and “well-off”, whereas Kashmiri families were lower status. When the Kashmiri families found themselves in the UK, they sought to address their disadvantage and, as a result, “progressed” in terms of their economic position and status beyond the other families. These historic clan lines

<sup>11</sup> Survey Q35.

<sup>12</sup> Survey Q34 and Q35.

and tensions and the change in status in the UK is a continuing source of conflict in Brierfield, sometimes manifesting itself in actual violence.

This is enabled by technology, which has affected contact with Pakistan in both positive and negative ways. While families are able to have regular contact through the internet, phone and messaging, it also allows instant engagement with “back home” tensions or family disputes. This then has an immediate ripple effect, whether the issue began in the UK or in Pakistan – it is fed back in real time, which can result in heightened tensions at local levels and issues being felt much more acutely than previously.

Interest in political happenings in Pakistan itself remains high. Many participants talked of a desire for political change in Pakistan, expressing optimism in the upcoming Pakistani elections and the former cricketer Imran Khan. There was disagreement among participants as to whether or not the military’s role in politics was beneficial. Some expressed the view that military intervention at key stages in Pakistan’s history had been essential for Pakistan. Others disagreed, with one seeing the military as ‘one of the most powerful interest groups’.

### International engagement on Pakistan

*‘Foreign policy, I think it affects people here because it’s like double standards, the War on Terror, and you begin to ask questions about who the real terrorists are.’*

Participants spoke of the problems caused in Pakistan by “international interference” and the UK’s and others’ foreign policy. One participant spoke about how external interventions and attacks in Pakistan make it look like a ‘proxy nation’ of the West. There was a feeling that the country should be left to its own devices to deal with its issues in its own way and that interventions that supported the country in this would be more beneficial:

*‘Give the country a chance to sort itself out, don’t impede the country from being able to make changes, maybe stop foreign aid, which falls into the hands of the few (except perhaps medical aid), and allow the country to work its own problems out.’*

Among the Brierfield community, the key aspects of foreign policy raised related to the conflict over Kashmir, military conflicts and the War on Terror. The US government was believed to have a lot to answer for, and, as their key allies, it was felt that the UK/Europe should be more active in communicating the concerns of the Pakistani community to the US. There was a strong feeling that the country had been let down by foreign governments and the international community, which has had its own negative effects on security.

A couple of people spoke about extremist narratives, both in terms of UK government policy in its approaches internationally and nationally. They cited 9/11 as a point in history where things have significantly changed in terms of Pakistan dynamics and repercussions in the UK. Frustration was expressed with how the nature of the West’s engagement in Pakistan makes the UK diaspora community feel powerless:

*‘Frustrated young people might then decide to take the law into their own hands, and then you see 7/7, which isn’t to justify actions... but I think if young people are channelled in the right way so they can express their views...’*

On the other hand, participants spoke about how recent natural disasters and the subsequent international responses have provoked a wave of financial and practical support from the diaspora:

*'I wanted to make a change, a difference, for those who'd lost their homes, so I raised awareness among women in our community, raised funds, charity dinners, charity events to raise funds for earthquakes in Pakistan. I made a difference by supporting existing charities who do work out there.'*

For participants, this provided a clear positive outlet through which the diaspora could support Pakistan. Asked what they would focus on as priorities going forward for Pakistan, they talked of law and order, social development, economic development and political change. These were described as problems that hinder Pakistan's development. However, one participant suggested that a lack of strong leadership within the UK diaspora hinders the exploration of these issues on a larger scale. They described the diaspora as being in 'sleep mode' thanks to their comfortable lives in the UK. However, another felt it was an issue of voice, saying, 'Diaspora community voices need to be heard', adding that diasporas can facilitate discussions about Pakistan that could not take place there 'because it is safe'. 'The question is,' said a third, 'what are we actually prepared to do?'

## 2.3 Somali community

This case study was drawn from interviews and focus groups with members of the Somali community living in the Salford area of Manchester. The total figure for the Somali population in the UK is not known. At the end of 2011, it was estimated that there were 102,000 overseas-born Somalis in the UK.<sup>13</sup> The population in Manchester is small, with official estimates at 5,000–6,000.<sup>14</sup> However, local community leaders believe the actual figure is much higher at approximately 20,000 due to continued migration from Somalia to the UK and births of the second generation. Migration has been mainly a result of the civil conflict in Somalia over the last 20-plus years. Consequently, a large proportion of the population are women and children (with the men staying behind to fight, disappeared or killed). The community in Manchester includes people from across Somalia, who initially settled in different parts of Africa such as Djibouti, Kenya, Yemen and Ethiopia to escape the civil war.

### Legacies of leaving Somalia

The impact of the conflict on the members of the diaspora we spoke with was felt in both practical and psychological ways. It affected the physical passage of the diaspora from Somalia to England, with stories of disrupted journeys, separation of families and the carving out of life in very different places. A familiar story participants told us was of a migration route from Somalia to Kenya (with a number of participants spending time in refugee camps) to another European country before finally arriving in England:

*'I moved from Somalia 1989. I moved to Kenya where I lived for a year and after that we moved to Holland, I moved there first and my two sisters and my mum moved with us afterwards, we lived there 'til 2001 and then we moved to England and we've lived in Manchester since then. My dad's mum is still there, my grandma is there and my cousins are there... Some have moved to Yemen, Norway, Holland, England, Sweden, Australia, Kenya, South Africa – anywhere you can find as long as you can get out of the danger zone, just get out, take your family out so no one gets killed, take any boat.'*

Participants talked with sadness of the separation of family members across the globe over generations and the continuing effect of this on their lives. One participant described the community as a nation of people that are still 'not settled':

<sup>13</sup> ONS (2012). Op. cit. p.13.

<sup>14</sup> Figures from 2007. See: The Change Institute (2009). Op. cit. p.29.

*'...the majority of my extended family migrated, we've got families all over the world now – UK, USA, Australia, parts of Europe, Somali, Ogaden – so it's all scattered... that has an effect on us because in our own culture we sort of look after our own people, so it affects us both financially and emotionally, our wellbeing.'*

The pain of separation is compounded by the stories of loss and death that participants carry:

*'I was in school and you know one day everything fell apart, people running in all directions, we lost family members, some were in the market, some were in the school, some at home, people were lost, people were killed. You did not expect that, it was hard to deal with. The only good thing is as the youngest you are energetic and think "I can do this."'*

Participants talked about having to manage the legacy of their personal experiences alongside the challenges of negotiating a new life:

*'We're still surviving, life's not easy, all of a sudden you enter a new culture, new language, new people, new weather and you don't know how to cope with these things.'*

There was a sense that “settling in” was more difficult because of the different identities assigned to them as “Somali” and “Muslim” by the wider community. They talked of the stereotyping that they felt labelled their community as “militant” and tarnished the reputation of “normal Somali folk” by associating them with the Somali Islamist insurgent group al-Shabaab:<sup>15</sup>

*'Al-Shabaab is not a tribal thing, it's just a group of young men that get together, that want power...'*

*'It's people who have grown up and been born during the war and so been exposed to nothing but the war so they're using that to their advantage and gathered people from a poorer living and paid them to do things like suicide bombing, kind of like a gangsta, gathering their own troops, going out and terrorising.'*

Participants felt that the misconception around the links between the Somali community and al-Shabaab affected relationships both between communities and with authorities such as the police – where they were vulnerable to surveillance as a security threat.

In addition, relationships between migrant communities were described as fraught. Participants talked of incidences of what they perceived as racial hatred experienced from other diaspora groups. A group of young women gave an example of being in the sauna with women from the African-Caribbean community:

*'Most Somalis don't, sometimes Somalis, uh, they don't get along with the black community, cos every time we go to the sauna we have problems, we don't know why... they say how could we have long hair or different features, it's not our fault... we let it slide, we can speak but better to let it slide than causing problems.'*

Women we spoke to acknowledged that the Somali community do keep themselves to themselves – ‘in school I might sit with different people and chat with them but outside school it's just Somali’ – with one young woman talking about her first experience of mixing with ‘White’ or ‘English’ telling us: ‘I had to learn to adapt, to know how to conduct and behave around people I'd never been round all my life before.’ As a result, many diaspora members find themselves carrying multiple identities:

<sup>15</sup> Described as a group in armed opposition to the interim government and its supporters. See: 'Q&A: Who are Somalia's al-Shabab?', *BBC News*, 23rd February 2012. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15336689>

*‘Obviously I’m British now, but I’ve got various heritages. I’m lucky to have that in some ways. I regard myself as British, then I’m Black African, I’m from Somalia originally, then my great-great-grandfather came from Ogaden. I’ve been a refugee three or four generations you know.’*

Other participants spoke of how straddling different identities was in itself problematic, particularly in the context of inter-generational relationships:

*‘Sometimes you speak to your parents in Somali and English mixed together and they get so confused... when I’m speaking Somali, I add some English words to it cos I don’t know the words in Somali.’*

Women, in particular, identified the younger generation as adopting more of an “English” culture. Younger siblings speak only English and not their native language, which leads to parents and children conversing less, causing tension and affecting how Somalis relate to their country of origin:

*‘I feel I’ve been here in this country so long I’m actually forgetting my own language, when I speak to my mum I speak to her in English... when you go Somalia and don’t speak Somali they’ll look at you... how come you don’t speak Somali, how come you don’t speak your own language, they look at you like trash.’*

One result is a number of people running projects to maintain their history, culture and traditions, not wanting them “to be lost”.

*‘The biggest problem [for the youth] would be to lose their identity, and if you lose your identity then I believe you’ll be lost because you don’t know where you’ve come from and in the bigger society you’ll be confused...’*

### Connections between the UK and Somalia

Participants in this study all talked of close connections with the various regions of Somalia:

*‘The relationship is strong to a big majority of the people, because there is always that responsibility that if we have kind of escaped all the atrocities and harshment and difficulties there it’s our responsibility and duties to look after those who are suffering... everyone had to contribute something towards that and send it back home.’*

Whatever takes place “back home” was described as touching those who are now in England. Participants worry about those who suffer in Somalia, and feel responsibility towards those left behind. A differentiation is made between families in the relative peace of the north, where there are “smaller” family-based disputes, and those in the south who are at the raw end of the ongoing war.

Terms such as “sense of duty” were used to describe the relationship with those back home. Fundraising and sending money to help families is commonplace: ‘They do it individually; every single person has a family member and they get calls from them.’ Participants talked of the raising of funds being done on a clan basis; however, it is also known that there is cross-Somali diaspora fundraising. What was not clear was how much of a clan element this had to it.

There was discussion about the cross-over of political activity between Somalia and the UK:

*‘Some of the people who are in charge in Somalia, i.e. some of the ministers that are there at the current time, some of them are from England, some got houses in Sheffield, some got houses in Birmingham, some even got houses in London, they’ve got their families settled here...’*

With concern raised about both how Somalia is currently being governed and the motivations of political representatives living in the UK, participants spoke strongly about those in power being driven by personal gain rather than the needs of the country: 'It all comes down to no knowledge, selfishness, greed, it's just unbelievable, it's all about power, maintaining that power.'

The absence of clear governance in Somalia was seen as creating an atmosphere of lawlessness, making it very difficult for diaspora communities to maintain the link with family and friends as they would want to. The nature of the connection was therefore dependent on the individual and the type of interest they have in Somalia.

People talked of staying in touch via phone and the web: 'Internet, that's it. There's nothing else. There's all sorts of news coming in from the internet and keeping people informed. Somali news in Somali language, there's quite a few websites.' Participants expressed frustration about the lack of reliability in reporting on Somalia, but also how this still influences their perception of the realities on the ground. One young woman said she preferred Somali channels as they reported things differently and included positive stories. This was contrary to the BBC who, she believed, only show negative pictures and stories. Many participants talked about the confusion caused by Somali state TV, who appear to exaggerate the dangers back in Somalia:

*'They control the media, most of the time you see suicide bombers on the TV and that, you call home and they say there is nothing in the city... Everywhere, they are destabilising the country, the people, all this negative is happening, it leaves you with all these worries, all these negative things... it leaves us thinking, what is going on?'*

*'Some of my family members from England went back a couple of months ago, and when they went there they were, like, we've been told a lot of lies, we were going to get robbed, this and that, they were absolutely fine, they had the best time of their life.'*

Because of confusion about what to believe and what not to believe, participants were, on the whole, reluctant to travel out to visit their families, as they were not sure whether it would be safe to do so. Some maintain links through the refugee camps in Kenya. A couple of participants highlighted the difference between Somalia and Ogaden (the Somali Regional State in Ethiopia). They talked of being unable to access information about families in Ogaden or the situation they are living in due to the tight control that Ethiopia has over the region and expressed frustration with the lack of direct communication with people back home in Ogaden. The nature of connections "back home" is reflected in a lack of cross-community "cohesiveness" in England. One young woman commented that it's 'very, very tribalist, the Somali community, which isn't a good thing', while another described the divisions he sees:

*'The clan and tribe issues are everywhere, in Manchester itself there's many clans... Everyone here, for example, they've got their own café, each goes to a certain café, you've got the Somali café here, you've got the Somaliland café there, but they speak the same language but they go rather to this one 'cause they've got more of their own people there... there's a community called Bravo community and there is a Somaliland community, a Djibouti community... those small little things do make a difference 'cause if you live in Manchester and you're still separating them I'm sure there's no solution for anything in the near future.'*

However, we heard different views on the impact of tribes or clans. One participant described the different tribes as being like 'branches on a tree':

*'Good thing is that there is not that much differences in the Somali community in here, even though the tribe is there, but there's not a big difference...'*

*'I think in all fairness the tribal stuff is all a myth... It's fine here but in Somalia it has been a problem, because others want to divide and rule.'*

And yet:

*'Problems are tribal [...] because you know different culture, different colonial cultures, that's the conflict and the impact.'*

Female participants talked about the accents and dialects that identify the different areas people come from, and explained, 'We have so many similar names people are recognised through their tribe, their family name, that's how they get their recognition, it's part of their identity.' Most of the women who took part said they had married within their tribes. The contradictions in opinions about the impact of tribes demonstrated an overarching view of participants that dynamics and tensions from the connections and traditions with Somalia remained in the UK Somali communities. Discussing this openly was controversial and risked causing offence.

It was felt that the UK and EU governments' support in this regard was sometimes counterproductive, entrenching tribal difference and ignoring the needs of young people:

*'I was quite disappointed, not with Somalis but with the British government and England for... funding different communities [in the UK], but they are one country – why don't we just open one big community centre instead of having these separate ones?'*

## International engagement on Somalia

*'If we can improve Somalia I know there'll be a lot of people going back.'*

The impact of war on communities "back home" and in the UK was the key issue for those we spoke to. Despite efforts to bring stability and progress to Somalia, there is a sense of betrayal among participants for what some see as inexplicable support by "the West" for a corrupt regime, and for the lack of recognition by international governments where their efforts are paying off. One man originally from Somaliland told us: 'You establish something for good they ignore it... it wasn't highlighted by the British, because we wasn't British colony.'

Looking to the future, there was a call on the "West" to pay more attention to the internal workings of authorities in Somalia, to engage with how they operate and to apply pressure on them accordingly to effect positive change:

*'England, specifically, must [remove the government] because they are the ones who are funding these guys...'*

Examples were given of how external decisions were impacting negatively on the country, with calls for the international community to look at the impact of policies:

*'...this is something that happened recently, when the Puntland oil or something was found, some British embassy people, or one of the ministers went to Somalia supporting them... [yet] Somaliland has not been recognised after 20 years of development... some people kind of felt betrayed and think, why not?'*

A number of people we spoke to felt that more investment in Somalia would have a positive impact in the UK. They highlighted cross-country dynamics through picking up on similar needs in Pakistan and Somalia and how they affect policies and agendas in the UK: 'If you invest and sort out the issues in Pakistan and Somalia, there will be peace here in the UK.'

Many had mixed feelings about current UK and EU policies towards Somalia itself:

*'I believe it's been good and bad. In terms of helping Somalis, it's been fantastic, given them hope, given them a lot of education... But a few years ago I was disappointed with the British government, because there was on Channel 4 Dispatches, it showed... British government funding Somalian government and "bad guys"... it could also be that they do not know who they are giving it to, unfortunately they are giving it to the wrong people's hands and it's not reaching the poor, it's just being used to buy guns and weapons and what have you.'*

Despite this, most participants felt that the responsibility to end the violence lies within Somalia. Different views were expressed about the role of the diaspora in supporting this. For some, there's a need to highlight the situation in Somalia and to try to influence change from outside, while others felt that there was only so much that they could do given the state of the country. One wondered how welcome help would be 'even if they [the diaspora] wanted to help I don't even think, to be honest, Somalis who live there would class us as Somali'.

## 2.4 Sri Lankan community

Our Sri Lankan data comes largely from group and individual interviews with members of the Tamil community in East London. This presents one particular perspective on the conflict in Sri Lanka that inevitably differs to that of other Sri Lankans, including members of the Sinhalese and Muslim communities in the UK.

Sri Lankans settled in the UK in what can be seen as three waves, each with distinctive features and inter-group relations. Between the 1950s and 1970s, migration was among the highly educated Sri Lankans who took up professional roles. Throughout the 1970s, migrating groups became more diverse in terms of skills. As the conflict escalated, particularly post-1983, increasing numbers came to seek asylum<sup>16</sup> and were predominantly Tamil. Official estimates suggest a total UK Sri Lankan-born population of approximately 120,000.<sup>17</sup> However, the figure cited by officials and community members is closer to 300,000, accounting for second and third generations.

### Legacies of leaving Sri Lanka

The end of the war in Sri Lanka in May 2009 has done little to heal the diaspora community in the UK. The manner in which the war reached a conclusion, with a complete military victory of the Government of Sri Lanka over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, has sharpened community divides between Tamils and Sinhalese in the UK. Research participants spoke of the great strain on these relationships (86% of Sri Lankans we surveyed said there was a correlation between events in Sri Lanka and conflicts in the community in England<sup>18</sup>) and, what they felt to be, longstanding prejudice towards them by Sinhalese:

*'...their inborn character "we are Sinhalese and we are the owners of this country", it was felt by me even in the streets of East Ham... sorry to say, I hope you don't think I am a racist but even the Sinhalese people here think they are better than us and their way of talking, their attitude is changed, before 2009 it was not like that... I don't know what is wrong with our people but sometimes we think we are second nation to the Sinhalese nation.'*

On the other hand, on a personal level, there is some evidence in our data that relations between Tamils and Sinhalese in the UK are able to remain friendly despite the conflict:

16 C.Y. Thangarajah (2011). *Working paper II: The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora and the challenges for ethnic reconciliation*. International Alert.

17 ONS (2012). *Op. cit.* p.13.

18 Survey Q31.

*Personally, I have a very good Sinhalese friend. Personally OK. He's very close to me, we're very together. When I studied... To study you have to go to Colombo. And in Colombo you can't study separately... Still we moved; we are together. If it's politics only, it's pointless. We are like family friends.'*

The survey we conducted highlighted that the main difference between communities in the UK was seen as political (86% of Sri Lankan respondents cited politics as the main difference) rather than ethnic or religious.<sup>19</sup> This indicates that, while allegiance is seen along ethnic lines, it is primarily driven by political rather than ethnic difference.

Although the tensions between the different communities came through strongly, so did the emotional impact of the conflict on participants. One man spoke of the 'defeatism' of the Tamils and the blow to the community that the end of the war has had. The nature of war, being played out along ethnic lines, with the Sinhalese community being perceived as the "victorious" community and the Tamil community the main victims of the fighting, has led to a depth of feeling among participants that the concerns for Tamils in Sri Lanka is only a Tamil concern and not shared by the wider Sri Lankan community. According to one Christian Tamil pastor, this had had a profound impact on many members of the community: 'it affects a lot of people who are here... many in my congregation have lost loved ones.' Participants spoke of the daily strain this has on their lives:

*'My wife, she is searching for her elder sister and three kids... and my wife is highly traumatised, she wakes up in the night, screams, and she is having so many disorders now, she was very healthy but she is no more now... she last spoke to her [sister] on the mobile on May 19th [2009].'*

This disrupts all areas of life with one participant commenting on 'how much I feel displaced, whether it is internally or externally'. Managing this trauma is something that is extremely hard to do in isolation and, as a result, the community has tried to find ways to support each other. One participant spoke of how he noticed he was not alone in his experiences. He decided that he could take action on this and 'I set up a home for mentally ill people, for Tamils, because of the loneliness, the restrictions on visas...' Another respondent set up a telephone helpline for the Tamil community called "Breaking the Silence" to support those suffering from the trauma of the war.

As with the other diaspora communities, the legacy of the conflict is different throughout the generations. With a third generation of Tamils now in the UK, there is a sense from older Tamils that the young are breaking away: 'children have more rights, you don't have any control over the children... there's a fear that as they grow up... of gang culture, [or] will they marry a non-Tamil person'.

Despite this, there is evidence from participants that the younger generation is highly politicised. One respondent remarked that 'most of the campaigns [here] are run by Tamil youth... they were brought up in the universities and colleges... the young people know about how the political system works here'. Another thought that youth street conflict in England has sometimes occurred along political lines, 'between Tamils, different gangs, [reflecting] different movements that were there back home... they thought even here we can carry on these beliefs'.

### Connections between the UK and Sri Lanka

Many we spoke to found it difficult to obtain clear information about events and conditions in the war-affected areas of Sri Lanka – as one participant put it:

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<sup>19</sup> Survey Q29.

*'...always it will be difficult to find out what is actually happening there, the true picture, there are so many stories going on.'*

A number of families and communities are still displaced and, according to one participant, 'the entire north east is deprived of productive resources, oil, electricity, tractor parts, fishing is banned.' Nevertheless, regular communication between the UK and back home does occur, with people using mobile phones as the main method of communication. As one put it, 'they like to hear a voice... they like to know that there is somebody, they are not completely left alone and forgotten.' However, there is also considerable fear surrounding the whole process of contact, with some of our respondents feeling that it was not safe to speak freely on the phone as this could endanger relatives in Sri Lanka. Several people mentioned that they were unable to travel to Sri Lanka because of fears for personal safety or concerns that files on family members still living in Sri Lanka would be reopened.

Participants talked about high levels of activity on the conflict within their community. Their response can be divided into two main approaches – humanitarian and political – but there also seems to be a consistent view among these respondents that the way in which the conflict has been framed by the international community and the media has undermined these efforts. Some recognise that this is partly a result of the strategy pursued by the Tamils themselves during the conflict. As one respondent put it, 'our mistake was to side-line the political struggle, so that the world branded us as terrorists... so all the international countries, including India, supported Sri Lanka.' Others see this as a deliberate ploy by the Sri Lankan government to appeal to the West: as the "War on Terror" got going, 'we were branded as terrorists... since the Twin Towers... state terrorism was not understood by the international community'. Consequently, participants have found it hard to mobilise political and humanitarian interest in the UK, as they believe that many have seen the Tamils as the perpetrators rather than victims of the conflict.

The most direct and immediate reaction is a humanitarian one, with much evidence of a wide variety of responses from straightforward fundraising to more complex support strategies. Some fundraising focuses upon very basic needs such as food. Some respondents felt there was a need to ensure humanitarian support was given in a transparent and independent manner. According to one participant, 'because there has been a lot of misuse of grants in the past... we try to be completely transparent.' He added,

*'...we especially avoid anyone with political motives... [because] we have to work with the authorities in Sri Lanka... so they should not have any suspicion of us... the persons who are receiving [the aid] need to know that we are doing it for their welfare and not for political influence.'*

One method to try to ensure independence and transparency, while also tackling the issue of isolation and displacement, has been to channel support directly from family to family between the UK and back home. As one participant put it,

*'...sometimes the fundraising gets into the wrong hands, you know, any community you find that, so what we are doing is we are linking one-to-one, pick one family from there in need of support, and ask here if anybody would like to support.'*

A similar scheme sponsored by Tamil Christian congregations was mentioned by a pastor we spoke to: 'we have another programme connecting families to families here and in Sri Lanka... it can be monitored by our church workers there.' Another response we were told of involved medical resources, including the supply of prosthetic limbs and visits made by UK-based plastic surgeons.

Participants spoke of attempts to support economic regeneration. As one participant put it, much of the north east has been reduced to a ‘self-reliant economy’ and so many in the diaspora are trying to support micro-level forms of regeneration that may involve simple solutions such as providing sewing machines to women who have lost their homes or basic livestock such as chickens to families who have been driven from their land.

The political response of those we spoke to focuses on spreading awareness of the plight of the Tamils in the UK, through political lobbying and campaigning. The existence of a small number of elected Tamil MPs in Sri Lanka was cited as a resource for these activities:

*‘There we have about 14 MPs, parliamentarians... Those MPs are all from one party. One party means it is a coalition. Like three or four parties together, it’s called the “Tamil National Alliance (TNA)”... So we have a branch here of the TNA. So to that extent we have links.’*

Tamils in our study provide practical support to their parliamentarians when they visit Europe and work closely with the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils who take a close interest in the situation in Sri Lanka. Some respondents felt there had been a small shift in the attitudes of Western governments post-2009 concerning the transition towards peace and democracy in Sri Lanka:

*‘The Canadian prime minister openly said... they should be brought to investigation for war crimes. Even Britain has said... They supported thinking that he [the Sri Lankan President] would bring the solution after the war. But he didn’t bring anything, now they have to do something for the Tamil community because they can’t just say “sorry... just keep quiet”. That is due to our lobbying and agitation.’*

Political campaigning has been well organised by the Tamil community in the UK and has included lobbying the Oxford Union in 2010 (the Oxford Union had invited the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa to address the Union, which was cancelled due to security concerns posed by the threat of protests by Tamil activists); blockading Parliament Square in Westminster in early 2009 to draw attention to the fighting in Sri Lanka; supporting boycotts of firms such as Marks & Spencer because of their continued trade with Sri Lanka; and protesting against alleged war crimes and human rights abuses by Sri Lankan armed forces.

### International engagement on Sri Lanka

Many Tamils who took part in this research study expressed outrage at what they felt to be the hypocrisy of the European response to the Sri Lankan government’s prosecution of the war in the North and East of Sri Lanka. One man engaged in campaigning in the UK in the final days of the conflict reflected:

*‘The international community said, you go and surrender, but what would happen to the surrendered because of the violent nature of the [war]... We know what would happen to them, it happens now, it is not a post-conflict, it is a post-war and the conflict is still there...’*

Criticisms were made by participants of what was felt to be the softly, softly approach of the international community in the application of the Geneva Convention to Sri Lanka. Comparisons were often made between the West’s response to the Arab Spring and its response to the conflict in Sri Lanka:

*‘...but the West has to do a lot more because when it comes to Libya, when it comes to Syria... you gather all the resources and hammer them hard... but we lost [people], [and] there are... war widows... we don’t understand this, is it because we don’t have oil?’*

Finally, there were some expressions of optimism that the situation in Sri Lanka was slowly coming to light. Participants expressed hope for an improving humanitarian situation and greater accountability for events that took place during the war. As one participant put it, 'we are more hopeful now because of the slow process, we can see some light through the actions of international humanitarian organisations...'



### 3. Engagement between diasporas and the UK and EU governments on peacebuilding and development

The case studies demonstrate a depth of concern about peace and development “back home” among the diaspora communities we spoke with. The question for desk officers with a mandate for working on these countries is how best to harness this concern to inform and improve the foreign and development policies of the UK and EU governments.<sup>20</sup>

At the centre of approaches to diaspora-policymaker engagement is a set of assumptions upon which all the different groups involved base their interactions: assumptions desk officers make about who and what different diasporas are and their ability to engage; and assumptions diaspora groups and individuals make about what desk officers are able to do for them, and the ability they have to influence events in the country of origin. This is often based upon inaccurate notions of the value of engagement, the level of influence of each party and preconceived ideas about interests.

These assumptions are partly shaped by the different cultural practices of engaging with “power”. In some cases, desk officers talked of the lack of tailoring of responses and approaches to the particular audience, for example, a minister would be approached in much the same way as a desk officer. This deficit in culturally applicable advocacy skills is evident on the part of the diaspora. To engage effectively is to engage on the terms and methods of the government.

In our interviews with diaspora groups, the level of frustration they felt with attempts to engage the government on issues of concern came through strongly. The deficit in recognising and working with different practices by desk officers is also evident. The easiest route to engagement is along the cultural norms of the UK government, yet this does not harness the value that the diaspora can bring effectively. Developing a solid understanding of the context from which the diaspora have come and the context within which they sit is critical to being able to create the most constructive methods of engagement.

This section explores this issue through interviews with desk officers from the UK and EU governments, while also drawing on the case studies and survey. It looks at both diaspora engagement with these desk officers and desk officer engagement with diaspora communities. It does not look at the roles played by High Commissions in the countries of origin, for example, the British High Commission in Nairobi or the European Commission in Sri Lanka.

#### 3.1 Diaspora engagement with desk officers

For diaspora communities with connections to conflict-affected countries living in the UK, relationships with the UK government are more often than not complex and difficult. As one points out, ‘we were branded as terrorists... since the Twin Towers.’ Despite this, 35% of the diasporas we surveyed said that they responded to events in their “home country” by lobbying for political support.<sup>21</sup> Such engagement is underpinned by their continuing experience both in the

<sup>20</sup> In this section, we refer to teams by their country names for simplicity e.g. Sri Lanka desk. The official terms used are: for the FCO: Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives Team, South Asia Department; Pakistan Bi-lateral Team, South Asia Department; Somali Unit, Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa Directorate. For DFID: Strategic Communications Team, Civil Society Department and Africa Directorate, Africa Division. For European Commission, DEVCO: Desk Pakistan, Asia, Central Asia and Pacific; Geographical Coordination for East and South Africa. For European Commission, EEAS: Division Horn of Africa, East Africa and Indian Ocean; Desk Sri Lanka; Desk Pakistan.

<sup>21</sup> Survey Q26.

“host” country and in relation to their “home” country. Their reasons for leaving, the prevailing conditions “back home”, the level and type of international intervention, their level of belonging in the UK and the challenges they do or don’t face in the UK.

Motivations for raising awareness of issues in the country of origin are varied. For some research participants, it is a deep personal mission. For others, it is born out of a sense of obligation to improve the situation back home, an opportunity for investment or a chance to support development. Motivations can be broadly categorised as follows:

- To raise awareness of a particular issue of concern;
- To influence UK/EU position on action towards the country of origin;
- To seek facilitation for investment routes; and
- To seek support for diaspora-led development in the country of origin.

The case studies reveal that participants have regular contact with their country of origin, keeping them politically informed and engaged. This connection offers direct channels through which diasporas can observe the impact and perceptions of UK and EU policies. In our survey, 38% of the diasporas felt that UK and EU policies and interventions had a negative influence on events in their country, with 16% disagreeing, believing the impact has been positive and 25% thinking it is both positive and negative.<sup>22</sup> Attitudes towards interventions varied from country to country and across time, depending on how engaged or not the UK or EU government was on the issues of concern to the diaspora and whether the UK or EU adopted a similar stance to the diaspora on key issues (such as allegations of war crimes by government forces in Sri Lanka).

What has been clear from our conversations is that diaspora communities recognise that engagement with the UK government, in particular, can offer opportunities for channels of support that would not otherwise be available. On the other hand, discussions with desk officers also indicated that there was often little awareness among diasporas of what international intervention was actually taking place. This is evident in the case of DRC, for example, where participants felt strongly that there was a lack of support for the country, although other information demonstrates that DRC was the largest recipient of aid in 2010.<sup>23</sup>

Desk officers reported to us that engagement from the diaspora side can be sporadic and ad hoc, making it difficult for the desk officer to know how to best engage. We were told that diaspora engagement is formed around predominantly single-issue agendas, which do not take into account either UK influence or policy priorities. Weak understanding of the mechanisms of influence within government; what can and can’t be achieved; and how to go about it stunt the effectiveness of engagement. This serves to reinforce the civil servant perception of a limited role for diasporas and affects how strategic diaspora engagement is able to be.

Examples of the multiple and shifting agendas of diaspora groups were given to us by desk officers as a barrier to better engagement. As such, there have been several endeavours to encourage diaspora members to create platforms that bring together different interests in one voice. One of the more prominent ones is Africa UK,<sup>24</sup> supported by the Department for International Development (DFID) as a mechanism to coordinate African diaspora approaches to policy and development. This eases engagement for the desk officer side, but is not always the case on the diaspora side. The varied motivations of diaspora members and groups do not lend themselves easily to the creation of common platforms, particularly where there are more politically motivated agendas.

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<sup>22</sup> Survey Q19.

<sup>23</sup> Global Humanitarian Assistance website, ‘Democratic Republic of Congo’, accessed 3rd September 2012. Available at <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/countryprofile/democratic-republic-of-congo>

<sup>24</sup> Africa UK website, accessed 2nd August 2012. Available at <http://africa-uk.org/>

From both the diaspora participants in the research and the desk officers, we heard of a number of lobbying and campaigning strategies by diasporas in the UK. However, there is not much evidence in our research of diasporas lobbying on EU strategies (although the Sri Lankan Tamil community has demonstrated some capacity to target the European Parliament). This was reflected in the interviews with desk officers in Brussels, who did not have the level of engagement that their British counterparts did. It appears this is a channel often neglected by diaspora groups. One desk officer in the EU talked about how diasporas could better exploit their Member of European Parliament (MEP) to ensure that issues of concern are raised at a European level.

### 3.2 Desk officer engagement with diasporas

Approaches to engagement with diaspora communities differ across government departments in the UK and in Brussels. Our interviewees on the UK side placed a value on engagement with their respective diaspora groups. However, the level of priority and action given to this varied significantly from practical need (due to the number of requests for information or the lobbying of constituency MPs) to a strategic need (due to the priority of the “home” country for the UK and the size and potential security risk of the resident diaspora population). The main approach to engagement was described by desk officers as being for the purpose of harnessing knowledge and social and financial capital for development purposes overseas. More specifically, the diaspora is regarded as:

- A potential investment or financial resource – increasing business relations, promoting investments between countries, providing support through remittances;
- A potential development channel – providing mechanisms and resources for undertaking development;
- A lobby group with specific interests/political allegiances tied to a “home” country that needs to be responded to;
- A recipient of and promoter for UK role overseas; and
- A domestic security risk, or groups in contact with those vulnerable to being a security risk.

Out of the four countries we focused on, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Somalia and Pakistan desks had embedded liaison with the diaspora as part of the job description of a desk officer, demonstrating a higher priority of these diaspora groups to the UK both domestically and in terms of foreign policy. Very recently (after our interviews took place in April and May 2012), the Sri Lanka desk appointed a civil servant with a brief including diaspora liaison.

In our interviews with Brussels desk officers and with the Sri Lanka and DRC FCO desks, engagement was described as an additional component of their work, with minimal resources behind it, which was juggled alongside competing demands. This does not mean that the diaspora is not actively seeking out these desks; indeed, both the Congolese and Sri Lankan diasporas have been very active at lobbying the UK government on issues concerning their country. It is more a reflection of the low capacity for, or priority given to, engagement with diaspora groups.

#### Department for International Development (DFID)

Since its creation in 1997, DFID has worked to engage more effectively with diaspora groups.<sup>25</sup> There have been endeavours at different points in time to increase understanding of diaspora groups and their interaction with their country of origin and to explore ways to engage diasporas in awareness of and development “back home”. This has comprised of different research and mapping processes (often internal and so not available to us) as well as working groups and roundtables around specific themes, such as remittances.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Clare Short announced as part of its creation that DFID should endeavour to work with a wide range of civil society organisations, including diaspora organisations.

<sup>26</sup> DFID funded a Remittance Working Group in 2005 to explore remittances as ‘a fast and effective way of shifting resources to the developing world’. UK Remittance Working Group 2005.

As well as direct engagement through the Civil Society Challenge Fund and the Global Poverty Action Fund, since 2009 DFID has supported diaspora organisations through Comic Relief's Common Ground Initiative. This programme works with diaspora organisations to undertake development projects in "home" countries in Africa.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, much (but not all) of DFID engagement was described to us as focusing on the African diaspora – mainly because this is the continent where most of their support goes. For example, in 2011 DFID held a number of events involving African diaspora groups designed to explore how DFID and diaspora organisations might work better together in the future. One such event was a roundtable (November 2011) organised by the Business Action for Africa, and included representatives from the African diaspora and other organisations. This looked at supporting more strategic engagement through business links with Africa. However, the desk officer we interviewed told us that the initiative has slowed down due to a lack of clear objectives arising from the events and low capacity within the team to work on this.

DFID officials highlighted a number of challenges when engaging with diaspora organisations. For example, diaspora groups often work with specific communities in the areas from which they originate, which are not necessarily the communities that DFID works with, partly due to higher levels of development in these areas. This results in less opportunity for convergence between diaspora interests and DFID priorities. It is unlikely that this would be the case for a number of the diaspora participants in this research who originated from conflict-affected areas where there are high levels of humanitarian and development need. It therefore raises the question of whether these groups approach formal DFID mechanisms for support and/or whether DFID's scope of engagement is able to encompass these groups. Where there is a cross-over in geographical focus, working with diasporas as a vehicle for development was acknowledged as beneficial. We were told by a DFID official it is 'where their hearts belong', and so the motivation, energy and potential for engagement is high.

An additional area of relevance for DFID is in working with diaspora groups to help communicate its UK Aid policies and to raise awareness of the context in countries in which they are present. The DRC case study is one example of the gap between perceived and actual engagement in development support (the participants believe that DRC is a low development priority for the UK). There is therefore some way to go to change popular perceptions. DFID officials described the work they did investigating diaspora media to ascertain key media outlets, networks and individuals for engaging diaspora communities. They then used these channels, for example, to put out messages about the Pakistani floods. They believe this worked well in terms of raising awareness of the humanitarian crisis and mobilising financial support. In the Pakistan case study, participants mention the call for support around the crisis but do not attribute any of this to DFID. Again, there appears to be a gap in communication on the role of the UK government.

Other topics DFID is interested in broaching are more "difficult" issues such as sexual violence in DRC. Our case study on DRC interviewed women who campaign on sexual violence and look for, but are unaware of, strategic alliances with government around this issue. This offers potential opportunities for collaboration in this area.

### Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

The nature of engagement of the FCO with diasporas differs across the country teams we spoke with and is particular to the specific country contexts in which they work. Despite this, all interviewees mentioned that, while they did not know how extensive the influence of the diaspora was in their countries of origin, they have a strong "hunch" that influence exists. The level and depth of impact in the country of origin is something that the UK government needs to understand if diaspora engagement is to benefit development and peacebuilding processes in the country of origin.

<sup>27</sup> Comic Relief website, 'Common Ground Initiative', accessed 2nd August 2012. Available at <http://www.comicrelief.com/apply-for-a-grant/programmes/common-ground-initiative>

One of the focuses of the **FCO Pakistan desk** is on increasing the information flow to the diaspora about positive interventions in Pakistan. They have a number of outreach projects, working predominantly through digital media, to promote positive relations between the UK and Pakistan, for example, using video blogs and social media through the “celebrating connections” project that targets the younger age group,<sup>28</sup> or the campaign “Speaking up for Pakistan: What would you say? Join the video debate”,<sup>29</sup> which is an attempt to raise the profile of the UK’s wider engagement in Pakistan beyond the US and UK political engagement that we heard about in the case study. However, this type of engagement remains problematic and controversial. The desk officer we spoke with recognises that the many roles the UK plays in Pakistan complicate the UK’s relationship with the diaspora. The impact interventions in Pakistan have on the domestic security agenda add to this complexity, highlighted in the case study where participants described feeling under surveillance because of their identity as Pakistani Muslims.

It might be partly due to this suspicion that the majority of the Pakistani diaspora that approach the FCO tend to come from a business background and have an investment interest in Pakistan. It was described to us that these groups argue for an equal relationship on a trade footing, rather than engagement on aid or development. During the visit of the Pakistani foreign minister in early 2012, the message carried by the diaspora was for a focus on “trade not aid”. This aligns with the interests of the UK government in increasing avenues for investment overseas and, as a result, there is a significant amount of engagement around diaspora investment through formal groups such as the Pakistan–Britain Trade and Investment Forum. The FCO team provides information and contacts but it is UK Trade and Investment that take these relationships forward.

Outside of the investment forum, we did hear about the contact that various diaspora groups and individuals have made with the FCO. The desk officer described this type of engagement as being divided equally between formal and non-formal groups. Agendas and approaches differ widely and, we were told, could be formed around very specific requests for specific communities or broader desires such as creating better relations within Pakistan. The range of issue areas make it difficult for the FCO to engage strategically with diasporas on these matters. Trying to identify the right individuals and groups to work with was identified as a key challenge, given the minimal resources available to support work and the lack of knowledge about group formations, backgrounds and agendas.

The evidence of strong connections and links “back home” was described as an asset, in particular because of the extensive diaspora media broadcasting in both countries. While this is currently not harnessed for development or peacebuilding purposes, the desk officer suggested that this could be a channel through which to influence processes.

**The FCO Sri Lanka desk** at the time of the interview did not have anyone with a specific mandate for engagement with the diaspora. This obviously limits the nature and extent of engagement that can take place. However, as we heard in the case study, the Tamil diaspora, in particular, is very well organised in lobbying and campaigning on issues concerning Sri Lanka both directly and through MPs. These were most often around allegations that the Sri Lankan armed forces had committed war crimes and human rights abuses. Much of the time, the response of the FCO Sri Lanka desk is reactive, responding to pressure from MPs and lobby groups rather than proactively seeking engagement. Typical forms of engagement are through letters, meetings and, on occasion, reaching out to diaspora groups. For example, they invited the diaspora to a meeting to discuss the findings of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Committee and the Channel 4 documentary *Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields*.

28 FCO website, ‘Celebrating Connections’, accessed 2nd August 2012. Available at <http://ukinpakistan.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/working-with-pakistan/CC/>

29 FCO website, ‘Speaking up for Pakistan: voices from the UK’, accessed 2nd August 2012. Available at <http://ukinpakistan.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/working-with-pakistan/SUFP/>

The FCO Sri Lanka desk does see a value and need to engage the diaspora on peacebuilding in Sri Lanka. It uses the Conflict Prevention Pool to fund a programme of work delivered through International Alert with the Sri Lankan diaspora to support peace processes in Sri Lanka through expanding the channels for engagement on peace and development and engaging the second-generation diaspora in this process. However, the FCO Sri Lanka desk does not always harness this to its advantage. We were told, for example, that these newer players had not yet been included in discussions with the diaspora. Nor were resources developed by NGOs that provide information about group formations within the diaspora being used. Instead, the default was towards engaging with the same groups that approach them, rather than seeking out different actors. In the interview, we were told that this was due to the limited capacity of staff and resources, but that there was the intention to redress this and to increase their understanding of how the diaspora operates and develop their approach to engagement.

**The FCO Somali desk** emphasised the importance of the diaspora as a political actor in its own right. The desk officer informed us that four of the ministers of the Transitional Federal Government are British passport holders. A number of broadcasting stations active in the UK are headed by a Somali diaspora member and the diaspora is already engaged in business, social, cultural and development activities in Somalia with remittances estimated at between \$1.3 and \$2.2 billion annually.<sup>30</sup> The desk officer was clear that the FCO needs to be both aware of and engaged with these developments in order to identify the best way to work with the diaspora.

A major focus of this engagement in 2011–12 was around the London Conference on Somalia chaired by the Prime Minister. A number of satellite events were organised to engage the Somali diaspora around this event, including a day-long event at Chatham House in February 2012, together with a number of closed and open meetings surrounding this with the diaspora to jointly explore future possibilities for Somalia.<sup>31</sup> This included a roundtable, a reception hosted by the Foreign Secretary the night before the conference and a meeting with the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street. The desk officer told us of the huge amount of outreach to the community this entailed to gather people's views and inputs to feed into events, the focus of which was to listen to the diaspora's experiences, thoughts and opinions on ways forward for Somalia.

The FCO sees a need to engage the diaspora on policy partly because, we heard, they don't have access on the ground in Somalia in many areas and want a link to the knowledge that the diaspora holds. However, despite all the outreach described above, it was noted that, with an absence of information about British foreign policy, what tended to fill the vacuum were rumours and conspiracy theories that are counterproductive to engagement. The FCO believes that this vacuum needs to be filled with accurate information and, the desk officer argued, 'policy engagement needs to be a two-way street with the Somali diaspora helping to inform British policy and the FCO explaining what this is.'

This is complicated – as highlighted by the Somali case study – by the diaspora coming under the domestic security lens in the UK. Such attention has led to grievances relating to the perceived severity of justice meted out to Somali young men, the intensity of surveillance of the community and the failure of the government to provide adequate support around needs such as education (the lack of language provision, in particular, was emphasised by both the desk officer and diaspora research participants as a barrier to integration). Understanding and addressing the continuum of experience of the diaspora (i.e. what happens domestically affects international engagement and vice versa) would appear key to working effectively alongside the diaspora for peacebuilding and development.

30 L. Hammond, M. Awad, A.I. Dagane, et al (2011). *Cash and compassion: the role of the Somali diaspora in relief, development and peace-building*. United Nations Development Programme. Available at <http://www.so.undp.org/docs/Cash%20and%20compassion.pdf>

31 FCO website, 'Conference on Somalia', accessed 2nd August 2012. Available at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/global-issues/london-conference-somalia/aims-of-the-conference/>

The FCO DRC desk appeared the least well resourced to engage with or respond to the diaspora. Despite this, the desk officer interviewed emphasised that engagement was important and was sought out where possible. For example, a meeting was organised after the DRC elections in November 2011 to gather the perspectives of the diaspora. The heightened level of emotions and the strong allegiances that people held made this a very challenging event for both government officials and diaspora members. This was coupled with a myriad of different groups approaching the UK government, posing difficulties in knowing whom to invite and when. Moving forward with engagement would require a deeper understanding of the different types of groups and agendas within the Congolese diaspora in order to know who to engage on different issues.

### The European Commission in Brussels

This institution had quite a different response overall to diaspora engagement. A Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe recognised the need for working with diasporas as follows:

*‘...the interaction between migration and development could be most successfully achieved through co-development policies... co-development policies aimed at involving migrants as actors of development who strengthen cooperation between home and host society should be actively promoted at the EU level.’<sup>32</sup>*

However, this commitment was not echoed in conversations with desk officers in Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid (DEVCO) or European External Action Service (EEAS). The majority of civil servants interviewed did not place a great value on diaspora engagement. This was partly because diaspora representatives are not as common in Brussels, due to the first port of call being host-country governments and the activities of Brussels seeming one step further removed. As a result, relationships with diasporas are considered marginal and take place when diaspora groups and individuals seek out meetings, rather than being instigated by the departments themselves. Desk officers thought that the best way to engage would be through MEPs or through the in-country European Commission office rather than at a Brussels level. Where this differed was in the case of the EEAS Horn of Africa team, which covers Somalia, which recognised the Somali diaspora as a key stakeholder in the development and conflict dynamics of Somalia and, as such, had increased its capacity to understand and liaise with the Somali diaspora.

### Collaborating across departments

Interviews with desk officers often highlighted a lack of awareness of what counterparts in other government departments had done, were doing or were planning. At the same time, desk officers expressed an interest in learning about approaches colleagues had taken and taking lessons from this. Large bodies of knowledge and experience have been gathered within different parts of the UK government. However, pulling this together centrally, coordinating existing and developing knowledge and even sharing approaches that are taking place rarely happens outside of the higher-profile events such as DFID’s roundtable on diaspora business engagement in winter 2011<sup>33</sup> or the Somali conference in February 2012.<sup>34</sup>

An exception to this was the Somali desk, which chairs a cross-departmental working group designed to bring together different government approaches to Somali engagement in the UK. This highlights the fact that collaboration across the UK government could be developed more strategically. A strong domestic agenda helps to drive this, and the additional interest in resident Somalis from a Home Office counter-insurgency perspective, in addition to the foreign focus,

<sup>32</sup> D. Ionescu (2006). *Engaging diasporas as development partners for home and destination countries: challenges for policy makers*. IOM Migration Research Series, No. 26. Geneva. p.25.

<sup>33</sup> In 2011 DFID held a number of events involving African diaspora groups designed to explore how DFID and diaspora organisations might work better together in the future. One such event was a roundtable held on 24th November, organised by the Business Action for Africa, and included representatives from the African diaspora and other organisations.

<sup>34</sup> Chatham House website, ‘International engagement on Somalia’, accessed 2nd August 2012. Available at <http://www.chathamhouse.org/research/africa/current-projects/international-engagement-somalia>

pushes this diaspora group up the list of priorities. This, in itself, carries complications. It underpins engagement with a level of suspicion and information gathering, which, in turn, risks changing the nature of the way in which the diaspora interacts with government. An echo across the Somali, Pakistani and Sri Lankan case studies was fear and mistrust of what is often perceived as a double agenda of the government in its engagement. This restricted interest and access for engagement and limits the possibilities for cooperation.

### 3.3 A partnership approach?

While motivations for engagement are diverse, the notion of diasporas as peacebuilding or development partners was absent from most of our discussions with desk officers in Brussels and the UK. Diasporas were more readily perceived by our interviewees as having the potential to affect development on the ground at a micro level than being able to affect policy or politics. Interviewees spoke of their engagement with diasporas being fed into strategic discussions around policy development. However, this was presented as an added extra to other forms of engagement rather than a purpose in itself. Mechanisms that could have supported channels for policy engagement, such as DFID's Country Assistance Plans, have, we were told by interviewees, dispensed with civil society consultation, effectively closing a formal mechanism for engagement. Despite this, there remain ways for diasporas to potentially influence policy. One such means is through the advocacy strand of the DFID-supported Common Ground Initiative. This offers opportunities for diasporas to influence UK development debates and international development practice. The European Commission's increased prioritisation of civil society consultation offers another such potential opportunity for better engagement. This, however, will require first a shift in approach from desk officers to recognise diasporas as a legitimate stakeholder in development and peacebuilding.

The diasporas often saw the government as an actor to be critiqued, lobbied or engaged with on particular issues rather than partnered with. A shift by both parties in their approach could enable the integration of diaspora engagement into broader development policies that would place diasporas at the crossroads between "home" and "host" interests and look to marry these.<sup>35</sup> This has the potential to lead to a useful channelling of both the financial and social capital of diasporas. However, this picture is somewhat more complicated when conflict is taking place within the country of origin. In these circumstances, the legitimacy of engaging with the "home" country government can be questioned by parts of the diaspora. Furthermore, political allegiance, direct experience and ongoing concerns regarding the welfare of friends and family "back home" challenge the suitability of having a genuine shared development or peacebuilding approach between "host", "home" and the diaspora.

Despite these added complications, "host" governments have the ability to change the structures available for diaspora contributions in such a way as to channel these contributions towards peacebuilding.<sup>36</sup> This would include ensuring that partnerships are made with individuals and groups in diasporas that promote peace, supporting engagement with the country of origin and working in partnership with diasporas to ensure applying the right policy at the right time both "in origin and in destination countries".<sup>37</sup>

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35 D. Ionescu (2006). Op. cit. p.21.

36 H. Smith and P. Stares (Eds) (2007). *Diasporas in conflict: peace-makers or peace-wreckers?* New York: United Nations University. p.12.

37 Khalid Koser in *Ibid.* p.12.



## 4. Recommendations



This report demonstrates the immediacy of impact that events in the country of origin have on life in the UK for diaspora communities. It also highlights the lines of influence and interaction between these communities and the country of origin. The conventional borders that demarcate our sense of place, belonging and engagement do not apply to these communities. Being able to both understand and engage with the complexity of the diaspora experience can be an important contribution to peacebuilding practice in conflict-affected countries overseas.

The interviews conducted with diaspora members highlighted ongoing interest, concern and anxiety related to these contexts. This intersects to differing degrees with policymakers who have a responsibility for international engagement in the countries concerned. If at the basis of their engagement is a concern for improving the impact of peacebuilding and development interventions in DRC, Pakistan, Somalia and Sri Lanka, then seeking collaboration offers the opportunity to utilise knowledge, skills and experience. Such collaboration can deepen the impact of interventions for both groups. The following recommendations are made to support this:

### For policymakers:

Policymakers face the challenge of acknowledging the diverse nature of different diaspora groups. Working towards engagements formed around collaboration and partnership would harness more effectively the skills, knowledge and connections that diasporas bring. Policymakers should:

- Map and analyse the different diaspora groups, their agendas and relationships with their country of origin in order to be able to establish appropriate partnerships with individuals and groups.

Information about diasporas accumulates, yet analysis remains in shorter supply. At the same time our research demonstrated a lack of evidence around the impact of diaspora intervention in the country of origin. Policymakers should:

- Better utilise and analyse existing information within and outside of government to improve understanding and build a case for partnership with diasporas.

Engagement is framed through a development lens, an information lens, a security/diplomacy lens or a single country lens. In reality, all these dimensions overlap. The research demonstrates the fluidity of connections and experiences in the UK and overseas. Policymakers should:

- Collaborate across government to assess the impact that both domestic and foreign policy have on the diaspora experience and the implications of this for peacebuilding.

### For the diaspora member:

Approaching engagement as collaboration is also necessary from the diaspora side in order to improve the quality and impact of engagement. The diaspora should:

- Strengthen ways of presenting the diversity of diaspora interests and needs so that policymakers can more easily engage; and
- Seek to better understand the policies and priorities of the UK and EU governments in order to identify the fit with diaspora priorities.

Engagement is framed through single-issue lenses or focused on a specific place or region in the country of origin. Broadening this out to look at supporting development and peace across the country, rather than where individual allegiances lie, can generate a more sustainable and far-reaching impact. The diaspora should:

- Engage on peace and development interventions in regions that have the greatest need in addition to places with personal connections.



