

A TOOL OF HEALING OR A TOOL FOR FUNDING?

DISCOURSES IN INTERVENTION IN POST-CONFLICT LIBERIA

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ABSTRACT

The present paradigm on transitional justice dictates that diverse interventions are needed in the aftermath of conflict. The West African country Liberia suffered from 14 years of civil war that ended in 2003 and is now the location for several interventions run by local NGO's funded from abroad. In the rural post-conflict communities of Liberia's Northern region, Lofa County, The Community Healing Project seeks to reach reconciliation, peaceful co-existence and healing. The project is run by the local NGO, Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services (LAPS), and financed by DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture. One element in the project has been to produce a book documenting the massacres from the war committed in four communities in Lofa County. It is the book as a discursive tool that this thesis seeks to explore through critical discourse analysis. Based on Norman Fairclough's (1992, 2003) theory and method the thesis unfolds how LAPS position itself as organization by constructing meaning in their discursive practice through the book and how the discourses that LAPS draw on to construct meaning allow certain possibilities of action in the rural post-conflict communities that LAPS is engaged in. The study of the dialectical relationship between discourses and social interaction generates reflections about the hegemonic discourses that constitute and constrain post-conflict interventions, the interactions that can transform these discourses and LAPS' position as an organization in the middle trying to negotiate between global agendas and local needs.

Key words: post-conflict, Liberia, non-governmental organization, intervention, discourse, critical discourse analysis

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Liberia is often characterized by its post-conflict status referring to the past civil war, the present instability, the process of reconciliation and the many humanitarian interventions initiated in the transition to peace (Abramowitz 2014, Pajibo 2007, Maulden 2012). The war ended in 2003 but how does life proceed where neighbors have killed each other, where family members, friends or authorities have committed crimes that affect your deepest trust, belief and everyday activities? The NGO's emerging in the aftermath of conflict struggle to



FIGUR 1: FIGURE 1. MAP OF LIBERIA. COURTESY UNITED NATIONS CARTOGRAPHIC SECTION (REVISED JANUARY 2004)

deal with this question and are still present trying to 'heal the wounds of the war' and ensure peace and stability (Abramowitz 2014). At present these interventions unfold under the umbrella of an international paradigm on transitional justice and reconciliation. A paradigm that is worth questioning as the universal solution to conflict, institutionalized through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, has come to be doubted within recent debate and scholarship (Anders & Zenker 2014). Challenged by localized interventions and anthropological research the universal one-fits-all solution risks losing support in the years to come Anders and Zenker argue (2014). But do localized interventions represent an opposition to the discourse on transitional justice or is it a micro level version of the same? As every social intervention is subject to dialectical processes of description and action in a political field it is interesting to explore how the pursuit of social change is constrained, constituted and transformed by discourse.

One of the NGO's working in a post-conflict context influenced by the language and practicalities of transitional justice and reconciliation is Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services (LAPS). LAPS work in the Northern rural region called Lofa County "*...to promote reconciliation and peaceful coexistence*" (LAPS 2014) with the funding of the Danish NGO, DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture.

Through testimonies documenting the massacres, ritual reburial ceremonies and memorial constructions in the chosen local communities LAPS, together with the local population, work to put the past behind and focus on a better future. One way of pushing for peace and reconciliation has been to record and write down testimonies from eye witnesses to document the massacres:

“One of the many ways that success has been achieved out of this process is by offering safe spaces through which members of 'bereaved communities' were listened to while they narrated stories relating to the bitter past experiences of their communities; current impacts of those experiences and what can be done in the direction of facilitating healing for the communities in general.”
(Foreword, LAPS 2014)

These narrated stories gathered by LAPS have been summarized into one common story for each community and are to be printed in the book: “Our Stories, Our healing for the future – Testimonies of torture and organized violence from four districts in Lofa County experienced during the civil war in Liberia.” The book can be viewed in its full extent in Appendix 3 and will from here on be referred to as ‘the book’.

I have been involved in the production of the book by editing paragraphs and creating a finished PDF for the printing of the book in Monrovia. I did this while interning in DIGNITY in the Autumn of 2013 where I spent four weeks in Liberia visiting the communities and talking to the staff in LAPS about the content and context of the book. Through my visit I gained insight into the production of the book and the social context it describes and derives from. I am using this insight to problematize how meanings are constructed and how these meanings affect social life in the context of post-conflict interventions.

From a constructionist point of view the book as a discursive practice is interesting because it co-constructs the social world we find ourselves in. These constructions and struggles over meaning can be unfolded through discourse analysis and contribute to an understanding of the field that post-conflict NGOs operate in. This thesis therefore aims to explore how LAPS position themselves through the book as a discursive meaning-making instrument and how the book as a meaning-making instrument influences, and is influenced by, the social and material life evolving around the intervention in the post-conflict communities of Lofa county as presented in my field notes. .

PURPOSE

The purpose of the thesis is to investigate how discourses constitute, constrain and transform social life and what LAPS’ position and possibilities of action are within this discursive framework. A second purpose of the thesis is to generate knowledge and reflections that can lead to a conscious discussion between LAPS and DIGNITY or internally in the two about the discursive framework for post-conflict interventions within which they are both situated.

My research question therefore is as follows:

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does the Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services position itself discursively through the book “Our Stories, Our Healing for the future” and what are the possibilities of action within this position in The Community Healing project in Lofa County?

To answer this question I need to answer the following sub questions:

- How does LAPS construct meaning in the discursive practice of their psychosocial work through the production of the book “Our Stories, Our healing for the future”?
 - Where do conflicting meanings emerge in the relation between the communities and LAPS in the social practice of The Community Healing project?
-

LIMITATIONS

There are number of limitations when writing a thesis like this one. First I will relate to theoretical and methodological limitations and next I will note some empirical limitations.

I am aware that Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis is well suited for in-depth linguistic analysis. It is however not the purpose of this thesis to do a linguistic analysis. The emphasis of my research question and Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis lies in the aspect of social change and power relations which my background in social work serves well to explore. My choice of theory is informed by this connection between social change, power relations and social work.

Since the book is not yet in print and distributed to the communities, due to financial discussions between LAPS and the printing bureau and decisions in the

organization, I will not study the aspect of consumption and I cannot say anything about this part of the process. It is the plan that the book will be printed sometime this year. My analysis is based on the finished version of the book but I cannot guarantee that there will not be any changes to this in the future. I have included the book in the appendix to ensure that the version that this thesis is based upon is available and so the reader can look up any further questions or curious interests regarding the book.

Two actors are described in the book and in my thesis; LAPS and the communities. When referring to LAPS I refer to the organization as a whole. When referring to the communities I refer to the four communities I visited during my stay in Liberia. Each community consists of several small villages situated in 'the field'. "The field" is everything outside the bigger cities in the northern rural part of Liberia called Lofa County. Both LAPS and 'the communities' are actors consisting of many different persons with different views and actions and the social strata within each of these described units can differ widely. In the thesis I construct LAPS as an organizational unit and the communities as an organizational unit knowing that there are many more nuances to this perspective.

The community aspect is based on my observations and field notes from four meetings where LAPS interact with the communities. It would be necessary to spend more time with LAPS and the communities to make a more definitive and consistent conclusion on how the two interact and how the relation evolves, which is why I only sketch out the issues and inferences. That said the short time I spent there has contributed to an amount of field notes in which many issues can be explored. There is an apparent issue on gender and the reproduction of patriarchy in interventions that would be interesting to look at, which I will not touch upon in this thesis.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to explicitly explore the relation between DIGNITY and LAPS. I work under the assumption that the book is LAPS' construction and it functions as an expression of LAPS' work, thought and position in a broader field of post-conflict interventions. It is evident that there is a relation of dependency between LAPS and DIGNITY and that the production of the book is influenced by this. This is described in the analysis of LAPS'

discursive practice, but it is not the specific LAPS/DIGNITY donor relation that is of interests. It would be too simple to ascribe DIGNITY all responsibility for the discourses presented. The discourses on view in this thesis are due to bigger systems of meaning than one actor can be attributed.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Within the field of post-conflict studies there is a range of directions in research. Peacebuilding, security studies, psycho-social studies are some of them. The literature on transitional justice covers a broad range of these studies in an interdisciplinary approach to post-conflict settings. From contributions discussing legal institutions, restorative justice and questions of truth (Hayner 2011, Huyse and Salter 2008, Kelsall 2005, Stover & Weinstein 2004) to literature on psycho-social interventions unfolding ideas of healing, reconciliation and traumas in war torn regions (Graybill 2004, Honwana 1997, Staub 2006, Stovel 2008), transitional justice functions as an overarching structure defining the interdisciplinary field in terms of a temporal concept of transition.

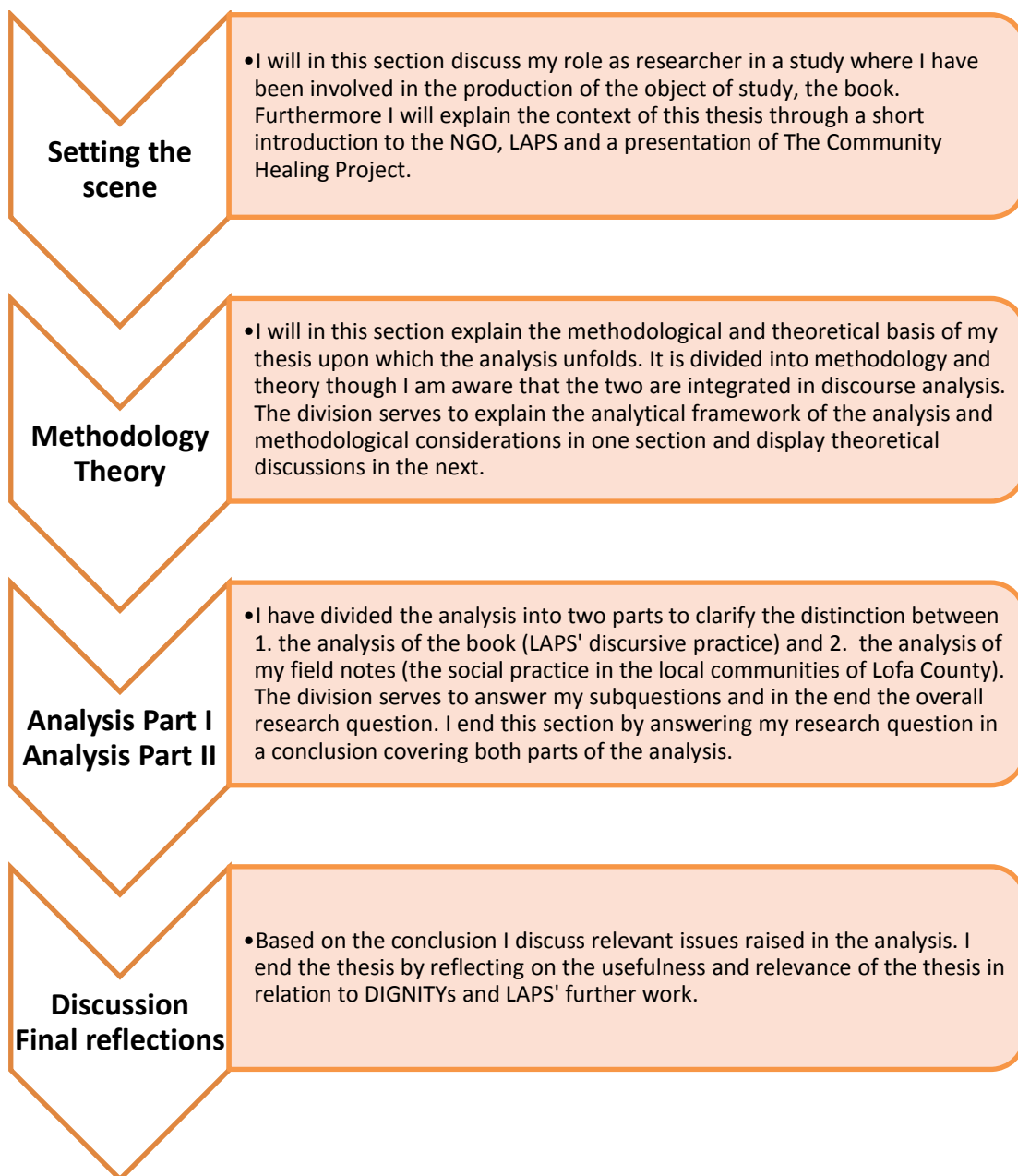
This thesis is situated in the periphery of the ordinary approaches to transitional justice. It does not concentrate around issues of justice but instead it looks upon a post-conflict intervention through the lens of an organization's discursive practice and what is displayed through this lens. It deals with cultural and local aspects of war and violence (Lubkemann 2008, Moran 2006), community work (Payne 2005) and the emergence of nodal points as described by Renner (2014) using Laclau and Mouffe's terminology in the analysis of reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa. The thesis touches upon terms from psycho-social studies because LAPS' intervention and organization is part of the international therapeutic paradigm as described by Pupavac (2004). But it is the discourses pushing for a 'prism of trauma' and 'external governance of emotional management' (Pupavac 2004) that is of interest and not the actual trauma healing. As a blend of discourse analysis and a more ethnographic approach to the field the thesis is different from the narrative explorations of for example child soldiers (Berman 2000) or other narrative approaches to post-conflict identities focused on

individual and subjective perspectives. The focus on storytelling as presented by Michael Jackson (2002) represents an essential view into processes of meaning-making in volatile and violent settings, but his emphasis on intersubjectivity is also different from the discursive perspective of my thesis. Critical discourse analysis allows for a macro level perspective drawn from the analysis of a micro level intervention, which is not too emphasized in research.

This thesis links social practice in the communities with transnational discourses to explore relations of power and agency as well as the potentiality for change. In line with Sally Engle Merry's studies on gender, human rights and local activism in NGO interventions (2006) the thesis seeks to 'map the middle' where LAPS is situated between donor demands and local circumstances. Studies have been conducted related to media analysis and political change in critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2001, 2006) but it has been difficult to find studies using a critical discourse framework to analyze post-conflict cases. This study is therefore of interest within a broader field of post-conflict studies, organizational partnerships and critical discourse analysis since it offers a view into the dialectical relation between social and discursive practices in humanitarian interventions with a view from the ground which is less highlighted by research in discourses.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The structure of the thesis is illustrated and explained in the model below. The book "Our Stories, Our healing for the future" is attached in Appendix 2 and is referred to by indicating page and line number when relevant. My field notes are not attached for ethical considerations but they are referred to by indicating line numbers.



CHAPTER 2: EMPIRICAL CONTEXT

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON MY ROLE AND OBJECT OF STUDY

I will in this paragraph address an issue of validity that might be posed in connection to my role as co-producer of the book which figures as my object of study in the thesis. To make my argument I will unfold my epistemological stand and use an excerpt of my field notes as an illustrating example.

As I flew in yesterday the only ‘odd one out’ compared to my earlier experiences was the massive park of UN helicopters. It reminded me that this is a country torn by war not long ago. It is hard to imagine warscapes¹, active wars affecting the surroundings, when you’ve never experienced it. --- I don’t know what I had expected, but reading so much about war and atrocities makes it hard to imagine normal everyday life. People chatting sending off relatives or greeting relatives returning from foreign places.
(Field notes 2013 :2-11)

This is where the field notes start from my four weeks trip to Liberia in the autumn of 2013. The war ended 11 years ago but most of the literature I had read about Liberia in my time of preparations was about war and violence and the on-going struggles in the aftermath of war. The quote from my field notes above is clearly marked by these readings and representations of the context I was to enter. As a personal reflection at the time it shows how unfamiliar I was with post-conflict situations and how insecure it made me at the time. I had taken in the representations of war, conflict, victims and perpetrators so deeply that I did not have a picture in my mind of how everyday life could look like for normal people in Liberia even though I had been to West Africa before. I use this quote to illustrate how perspectives can take form at a certain point in time. My knowledge at the time and personal bearings made me reflect in these lines. Was I to go to Liberia again, different images, ideas and observations would occur influenced by my experiences from last time and the theoretical reflections I have undergone in the time passed by.

¹ The term warscapes is inspired by Finn Stepputat's writings on governscapes (Stepputat 2013).

In a social constructionist framework as this thesis presents, the view is that our perceptions on things and matters are shaped historically and culturally in situated social relations. It is in the social process of human relations that knowledge and perceptions develop. This affects the relation between researcher and object and allows for a more personal, fluid process of investigation. Furthermore it gives the researcher a possibility of using personal experience to illuminate other life worlds through research. This means that there is no transcendent truth, no conclusion or idea that is more objective or accurate in its depiction of the world than others (Gergen and Gergen 2008). The validity of the research is a question of keeping the research transparent and open-ended to conclusions and make clear from what position the research is undertaken (ibid).

I went to Liberia with a specific role and assignment and my legitimacy and access to the communities was connected to this assignment. My observations and interactions are of course marked by LAPS' and the communities' relation to DIGNITY as donor as I was presented as a representative of DIGNITY. Had I gone there to do research and merely been affiliated with DIGNITY as a contact through which I could visit the project in Lofa I would still be infiltrated in this web. One can say that the observations I made were short and abrupt and only showed a small and maybe 'misleading' part of the social reality in Lofa County but there is no such thing as a full and truthful picture of 'social reality' (Gergen and Gergen 2008). In a qualitative study the empirical data will always be fragmented and biased. As I did not go to Liberia to do research I did not gather empirical material with a specific objective in mind. This can be an advantage since the results are not biased in this direction but 'only' in the direction of what I personally carry with me including the invisible discourses influencing my view of the world.

In relation to my object of study I will try to describe my role and experiences to create transparency for the reader. I was sent as an intern to LAPS without knowing much about their project and the context. While there I was introduced to the four communities with one meeting in each community. The stories of massacres were documented and written in November/December 2011 so almost

two years had passed since the stories were told and processed by LAPS. This means that the meetings I attended in the communities which were about the production of the book and the stories of massacres were not a natural continuation of the documentation phase. They can be termed as an interruption in the sense that the theme did not follow the intended structure of the intervention. This has to be kept in mind in relation to my findings and the claimed conflicts in the field.

My role in the making of the book can be divided into two; editor and ghost writer. I wrote the chapter called 'The war in Liberia', 'Effects of the war' and the short notion in the end called 'Your Story'. I consulted the staff in LAPS and in close collaboration we went through these chapters thoroughly while I was there and I made corrections according to their wishes. I have purposely chosen not to include these chapters in the analysis because of my involvement. Concerning the other parts of the book I had the role as editor. I checked for spelling mistakes and tried to shorten passages where repetitions occurred. 'Foreword' and 'The ethnic divisions in Lofa County' is written by the director and edited by me. The section describing LAPS and the work they do is written by the director and the supervisor and edited by me. 'Stories from the war' are translated to English and summarized by the field staff working in each community. 'The community healing ceremony' is written mainly by the supervisor and edited by me. 'Peace building' is written mainly by the supervisor and edited by me. My greatest influence, as I see it, lies in the structure of the book. The fact that it consists of a foreword, a methodology, a historical chapter, the stories and then the healing process carries resemblances to academic assignments instead of many other possible formats that the book could have had. That said the coordinator in DIGNITY also had requests for the book that he discussed with LAPS and thereby influenced the format of the book. An important issue here is that he was the one claiming that LAPS describe their method more thoroughly. In the end a final edit was done by the director of LAPS and he approved it for printing.

As well as research is a socially constructed activity so is the book. What matters is not as much whether an account is commonly true, but rather the social

implications that result from the said activity or assertion (Gergen and Gergen 2008). In the process of writing the thesis I worked in detail with parts of the book scrutinizing sentences which gave me a very different view upon the meaning of the book than the overall impression and opinion I had before. The more I have worked with the book in relation to the thesis the more estranged I feel from this piece of writing, which I almost felt as my own after finishing it in January.

My affiliation with DIGNITY has been in the form of a very independent intern position. I am not paid by DIGNITY and I am not hired by DIGNITY in a formal job position. This makes it possible to retain a critical position in relation to my perspective and empirical findings.

I therefore argue that I am in a privileged position to critically explore the field of discourses at play in the post-conflict communities in Lofa County and draw learnings from these that are useful for both DIGNITY and LAPS.

THE LIBERIA ASSOCIATION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICES

This section serves as a short introductory paragraph to LAPS' work, the organization's origin and the relation to DIGNITY. It is based on a project description made by LAPS and DIGNITY (DIGNITY 2012).

Liberia suffered from violent fights, mass killings and politicized hatred spreading across the country during a civil war running from 1989 until 2003. The war cost approximately 250.000 lives and led one million of Liberia's 4 million inhabitants to flee the country. LAPS grew out of Liberia's violent past. Taught and trained by an American NGO named Centre for Victims of Torture (CVT), many of the present day staff members of LAPS started their career as psycho social counsellors when they themselves were in refugee camps in Sierra Leone and Guinea. 6 years of training and experience with CVT led to the foundation of the non-governmental member organization LAPS in 2007. Since its founding as an independent organization, LAPS has been providing services to victims of torture in Liberia, many of them returned refugees, like most LAPS' members

themselves. Their work is influenced by a western individualized, psychiatric and psychological approach to mental health because of their origin and education from the U.S. based CVT. This is apparent in an example from the field notes where it is stated: “it was good to talk about the massacres even though it hurt” (field notes 2013: 402-403). A background like this is very common in post-conflict settings as described by Pupavac (2004) and Abramowitz (2014).



In 2011 DIGNITY engaged in a partnership with LAPS. A pilot project was initiated in the rural war torn region of Lofa County and prolonged into a 2-year project running from 2012-2014.

THE COMMUNITY HEALING PROJECT IN LOFA COUNTY

In this section I will describe the community healing project, the structure and the staff working with the community healing project. It serves as context but also as important background knowledge in order to understand the social field LAPS is situated in and how it influences their discursive practice as seen in the analysis. It is based on my field notes (2013: 19-196).

The community healing project is situated in the Northern part of Liberia called Lofa County. LAPS has an office in the capital city of the region, Voinjama City (see map page 1). In Lofa County no roads are paved and the roads leading to ‘the field’ are rough which means it is quite a journey to go anywhere. The area is hilly and lush and small villages lie along the red dusted roads or they are plotted

around the green landscape. Approximately 270.000 inhabitants² live in Lofa County most of these in smaller rural communities but the towns of Voinjama, Foya and Kolahun are growing bigger.



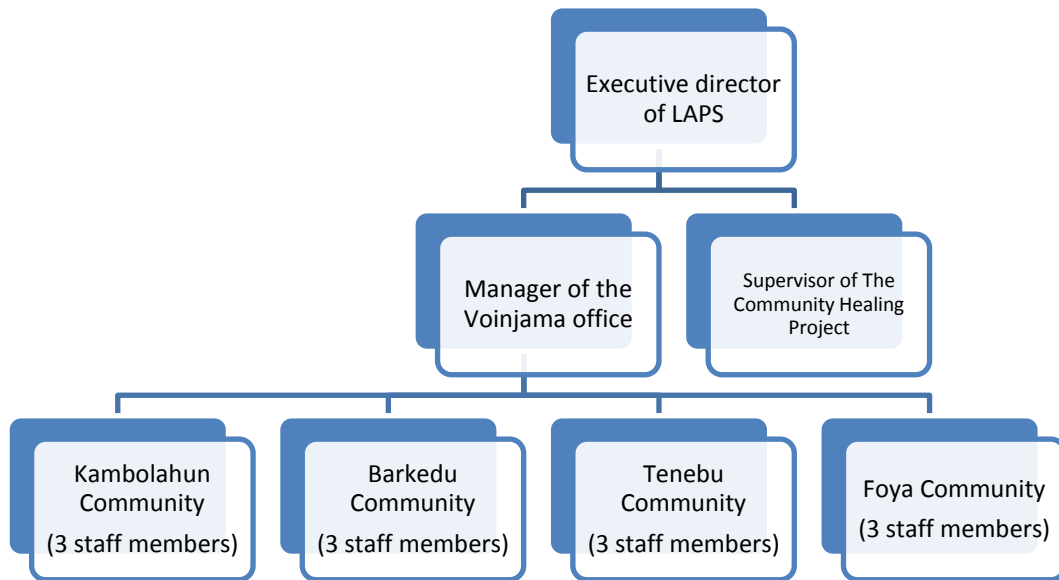
Photo: Voinjama City seen from the Voinjama view point in September 2013.

The population in Lofa is mainly spread across six ethnic groups: Mende, Kissi, Gbandi, Mandingo, Kpelleh and Lorma. A mix of Christianity, Islam and traditional religions are represented in most communities with a majority to one side or the other. A community consists of four-five small villages situated close to each other. They may share a market, a road, have common fields or other collective measures. The first four sites that LAPS started working in: Kambolahun, Foya, Tenebu and Barkedu are called ‘the old sites’ by staff members. This work began as part of the pilot project in 2011. Here LAPS have documented the massacres and facilitated a reburial healing ceremony in each of the communities in the spring of 2013. In each community the reburial ceremony related to killings of approximately 100 victims and sometimes up to 200 victims. The stories in the book are from these four sites. LAPS is presently engaged in four new sites which were selected in 2012/2013 and stories have been gathered from these sites as well. A ceremony is still to be held in each of the four new

² ["2008 National Population and Housing Census: Preliminary Results"](#). Government of the Republic of Liberia. 2008.

sites but the threat of Ebola in the region has postponed the process. The four ‘old’ communities are the ones that I visited and whose stories and process of healing are in the book. I did not visit the new sites.

MODEL 2: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE IN THE COMMUNITY HEALING PROJECT.



The staff working in the field are hired and assigned according to the social counselling qualifications they have but also the dialects they speak. Each community has a different dialect, which makes it essential for the staff to be able to speak and understand the local dialects. Some people speak English but it is rare in the small villages. The connection between ethnicity, dialect and region means that the staff is often affiliated to the community they work in. Some people live there already, others have family or relatives living there, others again have traveled far for the job and left their family in Monrovia or other places. The educational level and English qualifications among the staff varies. While I was there it was solely the supervisor who wrote additional paragraphs for the book and when collaborating with LAPS staff on the book some spoke a lot more than others (Field notes 2013: 170-174). It is therefore possible that LAPS’ discursive practice is far from what some of the staff members practice in the communities. Still it is the people in the leading positions that have been involved in the book production, which means that the language used also has some effect for the common employee and serves as a guiding line for the organization.



Photo: Writing in the memorial construction in Foya (DIGNITY was formerly known as RCT)

Since the book describes all phases in the community healing project, and not only contains the stories from the war, it makes sense to get an overview of the structure of the project. It is not common for LAPS to write a lot of reports which means that there are no written descriptions of the project except for the general project description made with DIGNITY. The description in the text box is therefore constructed from what I was told about the community healing project (Field notes 2013: 90-137). It shows the elements in the intervention and how LAPS approach and proceed with the project community.

TEXT BOX 1: STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNITY HEALING PROJECT

Structure of the project

Identification and selection of site of intervention

Community entry

Observe present condition of community, building trust and acceptance.
Awareness and presence – community speak about their wishes and needs
Establish committees: peace building committee, healing committee and memorial committee with 10-15 persons in each representing the diversity of people.

Documentation

Identification of interviewees
Recording, writing, questionnaire form, photos and GPS position
Translation of local dialects into English
Summarizing individual stories into one common story for each community
Truth verification

Ceremony – planning and facilitation

The healing committee is responsible for planning and conducting the ceremony.
The memorial committee is responsible of building a memorial construction.
The peace building committee is responsible of supporting the healing ceremony process.
All the committees work in collaboration with LAPS who supervise and facilitate the process as well as they give financial support to the village for food and building materials if the community cannot provide it themselves.

Sustainability of the project

After the ceremony is finished and the memorial construction is built the healing committee and the memorial committee are no longer active. The peace building committee is the only active forum. The peacebuilding committee will attend a capacity building workshop in conflict management held by LAPS staff. Their focus is to learn to solve conflicts peacefully, to prevent conflicts and misunderstandings in the community and ensure the sustainability of the project. Among other things they arrange sports activities as part of the peace building efforts.

Next I will present and discuss my methodological and theoretical framework. I will explain why I have chosen to use Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and how it serves to answer my research question.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

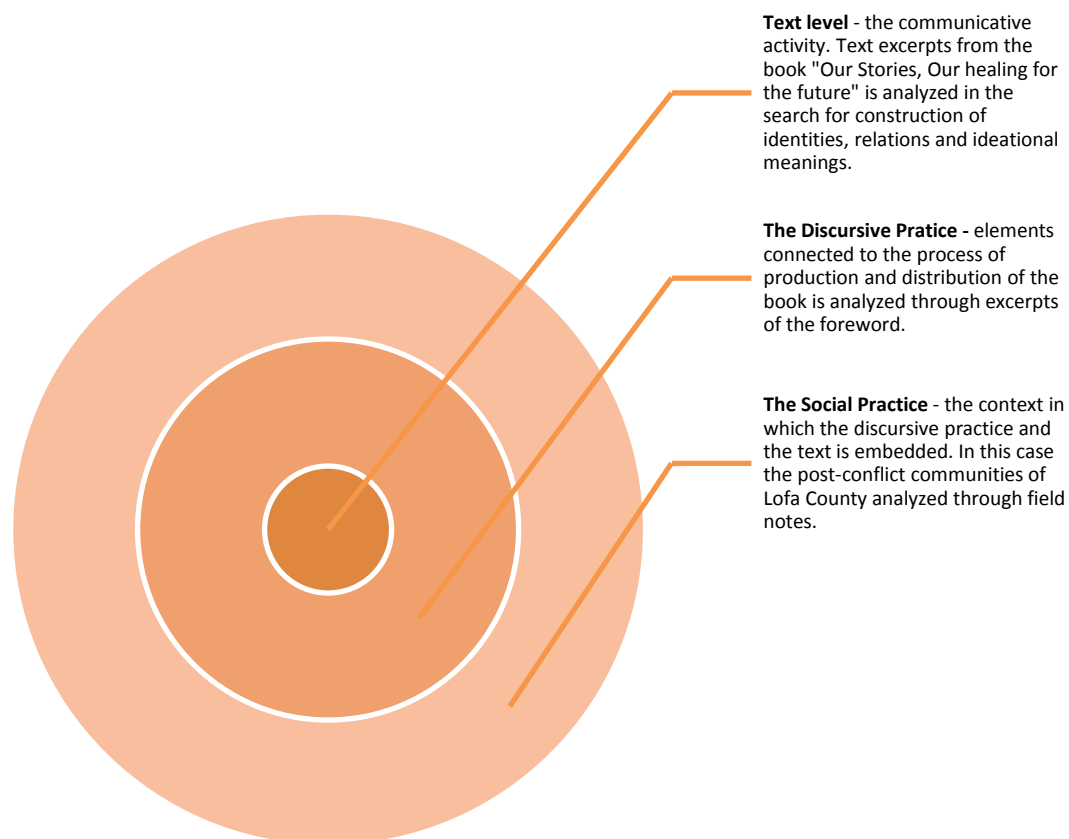
I have chosen to analyze my object of study from a qualitative perspective based on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (1992, 2003). First I will argue why I have chosen discourse analysis as a framework for the thesis and next I will argue why I specifically have chosen Fairclough's critical discourse analysis.

I have chosen to answer my research question through the lens of discourse analysis because the study of discourses can contribute with important knowledge on discursive structures and how actors draw on these structures to construct meaning. Unlike Laclau and Mouffe (1985) I do not believe that everything is discursively constructed. In line with Fairclough, I believe that social actors, structures and practices construct the social world. Language is one of these practices. This view opens up for the possibility of analyzing agency which is essential in the search for social change. In the specific case of LAPS and the Community Healing project Fairclough's theory allows exploring the discourses constituting post-conflict interventions and the social structures that challenge them. The complex interplay between these two dimensions offers insights into power relations and social dynamics of change. To answer my research question I have therefore chosen to use Fairclough's analytical framework to examine the dialectical relationship between LAPS' discursive activity (the book) and the social practice in the Community Healing Project in the post-conflict communities of Lofa county (field notes). By doing this it is possible to say how LAPS position itself discursively by drawing on certain discourses and draw out reflections about the organization's possibilities of action within these discourses.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Fairclough conceptualizes his analytical framework in three levels: text, discursive practice and social practice (1992: 231). The thesis is structured along this model because it gives the possibility of relating the discursive to the non-discursive though it is a difficult line to draw. In the analysis the text level and the discursive practice constitute the first part of the analysis and the social practice constitutes the second part. A critique of Fairclough's model is exactly the question of where the discursive practice starts and the social practice ends and vice versa (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999). I argue that the attempt to draw a line simplifies social processes of construction and constitution but still serves to outline complex relations between discourse and social life in a politically defined field.

MODEL 1: FAIRCLOUGHS THREE DIMENSIONAL MODEL ILLUSTRATING THE ANALYTICAL STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS



In the analysis I will begin with the discursive level. I analyze the foreword of the book through the analytical tools intertextuality and interdiscursivity to be able to

trace discourses presented in the text. The purpose is to explore which discourses LAPS draw on to construct meaning. The foreword represents an important framework for the book and indicates the anticipated audience of the book. The discursive practice is in Fairclough's terminology concerned with production, distribution and consumption. This study emphasizes distribution – who is the audience of the book? The discursive level overlaps with the text level and it is not possible to draw strict lines between the two.

In the text level I will go deeper into the chosen text samples in order to investigate how LAPS construct relations and identities in the text. Text excerpts from the book are analyzed through the analytical tools of interactional control, subject positions, modality and ethos. In both levels I analyze the book as a discursive construction to answer the first sub question: *How does LAPS construct meaning in the discursive practice of their psycho-social work through the production of the book "Our Stories, Our healing for the future"?*

The second part of the analysis consists of the social practice. The social practice is the context in which the discursive practice is embedded. In this case that is the post-war situation of Liberia and in specific The Community Healing intervention in the chosen communities in Lofa County. In this setting I will explore the interaction between LAPS and the communities still using the analytical tools interactional control and ethos. I search for places in my field notes where conflicting meanings occur to see how global discourses on transitional justice found in LAPS' discursive practice are acted out or challenged in the field. It is therefore not an interactional analysis in Goffman's terms (Payne 2005: 218-219), though I use the analytical concept interactional control which is closely related, but rather a view on discourses from below to explore how discourses potentially constrain social interventions and how discourses can be transformed by local, social interventions. Through the field notes I will unfold the second sub question: *Where do conflicting meanings emerge in the relation between the communities and LAPS in the social practice of The Community Healing project?* which enables me to answer the part about LAPS' possibilities of action in the overall research question.

It is through the dialectical relationship between the discursive practice and the social practice that power relations and processes of change can be explored (Fairclough 1992) and it is by studying these two dimensions I will answer my overall research question: *How does the Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services position itself through the book “Our Stories, Our Healing for the future” and what are the possibilities of action within this position in The Community Healing project in Lofa County?*

ANALYTICAL TOOLS

In this section I will describe the analytical tools I use in the analysis. I will use them interchanging in the analysis and so a short overview of each term provides the necessary knowledge to make the analysis comprehensible and easy to read. In the excerpts of text that I analyze I have emphasized important words and/or subjects in bold and underlined longer sentences that carries important meaning. In some excerpts I have emphasized active verbs in italic to analyze the actions in the text.

Interdiscursivity: Interdiscursivity is about the presence of other discourses in a text in order to explore ‘the orders of discourse’. The orders of discourse refer to the hegemonic struggle over discourses in different arenas. As mentioned a discourse is always instable and open for intrusion which means that competing discourses in a field can change place and influence each other. Therefore when searching for interdiscursivity, the purpose is to trace the transformation or reproduction of discourses. Fairclough talks about styles, genres and discourses within the orders of discourse. In the analysis I will only use the concept ‘discourse’. (Fairclough 1992: 124-)

Intertextuality: Intertextuality refers to intertextual chains of production and distribution. Interdiscursivity is a kind of intertextuality in the text but drawing on discourses instead of text or speech. By intertextual chains I mean which kind of text or speech the analyzed text is transformed into or out of. In relation to distribution it is a question of audiences – for example if there are signs that the text producer anticipates more than one sort of audience. I refer to the term

audience when analyzing the possible receivers of a discourse still with an emphasis on production and distribution not consumption (Fairclough 1992: 130).

Manifest intertextuality: Manifest intertextuality is when speech or text from other texts or authors is referred to directly or indirectly. It can be a text reference but it can also occur as reference to other kinds of data clearly demarcated in the text or translated into the text's own voice (Fairclough 1992: 117).

Interactional control: Interactional control explicates the concrete enactment and negotiation of social relations in social practice. The objective of the concept is to describe interactions and agency at different levels. How is the agenda set or negotiated and by whom? I do this by looking at object and subject positions in the text to be able to trace passivity and agency and explore how social relations are constructed (Fairclough 1992: 152).

Modality: The purpose of looking at modality is to explore the degree of affinity expressed through the modality of specific verbs (Fairclough 1992: 236).

Ethos: The objective of the term ethos is to highlight features from the whole text that combined contribute to the construction of social identities. I use this term in order to explore the construction of LAPS' identity in the discursive and social practice of their work (Fairclough 1992: 166).

Nodal point: Nodal point refers to a word that seeks to fix meaning and around which other words achieve their meaning. I use the concept of nodal points to highlight specific words that are essential in the process of meaning-making (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

THE DATA SAMPLE

The data sample consists of the book and my field notes. The book can be viewed in full length in appendix 2. I have included extensive text excerpts in the analysis to ensure dependability and confirmability of the analysis (Guba & Lincoln in Schwandt 2007: 299). I will begin with describing the book.

The book: “Our Stories, Our healing for the future”

The book is 60 pages long in an A5 size and contains 4 stories from four communities and 22 photos that I have not included in my analysis. I have placed a few photos in the thesis to give the reader a visual impression of my dataset and the context in which it is situated, but they are not part of the analysis. To get an impression of the structure and content of the book the table of content can be viewed on page 1 in the book (Appendix 2).

I have selected a broad variation of text samples from the book in order to create a representative view into the overall structure of the book. The text pieces shown in the analysis are excerpts of the fully analyzed text sample, but in the thesis they function as the main text and all textual examples referred to in the analysis are drawn from the presented excerpt.

I have chosen to examine these five sections of the book:

1. *Foreword* – the foreword of the book written by the executive director of LAPS.
2. *Why community healing?* – The chapter explaining why LAPS has chosen the approach called ‘community healing’.
3. *LAPS’ method and collaborative activities with the project communities* – the chapter describing LAPS’ approach and method in the field.
4. *Tenebu* – one of the documented stories from a community where a massacre took place during the war. The community is called Tenebu and the story is based on and summarized from five interviews with witnesses.

5. *The community healing ceremony* – an excerpt of the chapter describing how the communities and LAPS have prepared and facilitated a community healing ceremony and reburials in each community.

I have selected passages from the book based on the perspective that the chapters describing LAPS' practical work are most relevant for my analysis. Therefore I have not gone into the historical chapter about the war and the tensions in Lofa County even though they definitely carry importance in the construction of historical identity and memory. It is not the focus of my thesis to deconstruct the building of a historical identity on a more general level but rather to depict the book as a meaning-making process on an organizational and interactional level. The chapters that I have not analyzed are as follow: Acknowledgement, Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services, The war in Liberia, The ethnic divisions in Lofa County, Effects of the war, Peacebuilding and Your story.

I divided every text excerpt into sentences as I view every sentence as a meaning-making unit. I did this to deconstruct the bigger storyline. In each sentence I searched for objects in line with my analytical tools and divided them into the following categories: subjects and actions, objects, interactional control, interdiscursivity, intertextuality and nodal points. I did the coding in excel sheets with the mentioned categories related to discourse analysis. An example of the coding is attached in Appendix 1.

In relation to the credibility of the discourses drawn from the text and displayed as representative of LAPS' discursive practice I would like to mention that it is not assumed to be a full picture of LAPS' discursive practices. The knowledge generated is based on the book and not on other discursive activities that might show a different picture of LAPS. The book is produced by LAPS and to a large degree depicts a realistic picture of LAPS' activities still it does not represent any truths about LAPS. The discourses that are revealed in the book are credible in that they have been systematically documented and the process is traceable throughout the analysis, which makes it possible to trace potentially wrong assumptions and interpretations of the data.

Field notes

My field notes are collected from the four community meetings I attended while visiting Lofa County. The meetings are spread across a time span of one week. The community meetings were set up by LAPS to give me an impression of the physical sites, the people and their stories. It was intended that I could ask questions to their stories from the war in order to correct information or be sure that I had understood the written stories correctly. Therefore it was expected of the community members that they re-told their memory of the massacre at the meeting. I did not set up the agenda or the framework of the meetings. It was led and controlled by LAPS. In average we spent 2 hours in each community. We arrived and people were gathered already or on their way to the meeting. The supervisor presented me in the role as writer/ producer of the village book and explained that I needed to hear the stories to be able to produce the book. There was not much time to walk around and observe or talk more informally with LAPS staff or community members. The supervisor seemed keen to go back to the office after the meetings ended. This is of course a limit to my observations but on the other hand it also serves as a practical limit to the empirical material in relation to the time and space at hand. The meetings are furthermore a relevant interaction to observe since I get to see a very confrontational setting between



LAPS and the communities where conflicts can erupt and function as a penetration to deeper meanings in the relation.

Photo: One of the meetings I attended. This is at the memorial structure in Kambolahun with members of the peacebuilding committee, town chief and other community members.

At the meetings I took notes to get as much information from the communities as possible. I did not have a specific aim with my notes. I thought it would be good to re-read them at a later point if it turned out to be relevant in order to make the book. The people in the rural communities all spoke in different dialects. Some spoke English but most people spoke Liberian English or their dialect. Therefore my notes are mostly based on what the supervisor translated to me and my observations. This means that there is a lot of dialogue at these meetings that I did not understand and it also means that the supervisor as a translator had an impact on my notes. He translated quick and directly when people told the stories of massacres. When there were discussions he translated parts of them to me to give me an idea of what was going on. I do not have the impression that he tried to hide anything or minimize some people's opinion over others. That said the supervisor is not a professional translator which increase the risk of a biased translation. But in this case the supervisor also legitimized my access to the field and informed me of other relevant issues concerning ethnicity, location and background which made him an essential informant in ethnographic terms (Bujra 2006).

In line with the grey zone between the role as translator and informant field notes can be ascribed the same ambiguity. As Schwandt argues field notes are an interpretative practice (2007). It is hard to specify exactly how to work with field notes when it in the end comes down to the process of the individual researcher and the personal experiences he or she take with them from the field. As Schwandt (2007) describes there are field notes written directly in the field and then there is 'head notes'. The stuff you remember and develop after the fieldwork is over. It was not until I began writing my thesis in the spring 2014 that I looked at my notes again. When re-reading them a lot of details came to mind and I worked with the notes to make them more thick and detailed. I noted when things were translated and when they were said in English to the extent that my memory allowed. Working with the notes for a longer period and in depth opened up for new understandings of the material. I divided the content into themes that appeared after having worked with the descriptions in detail: Gender, spirits, the psycho-social intervention model and expression of demands for basic or other

needs. From these themes a pattern of negotiation in interaction emerged and defined the main focus of my field notes.

To ensure credibility (Schwandt 2007: 299) of the thesis, concerning the representation of the communities, I have taken as point of departure the places where conflicts emerge in my field notes. According to Fairclough the studied sample should be selected depending on where ‘moments of crisis’ are found (1992: 230). The conflict that I refer to in the beginning of the analysis of the social practice is one such. There is no doubt that there are different meanings and opinions in play, which is why I have chosen it as an example of emergent meanings (Williams 1977).³

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Concerns regarding ethical considerations in this study mainly rely to the identity of LAPS’ staff. I have intentionally not mentioned names in the analysis. That said I have been given full consent from the director of LAPS to use the book, my photos and any material gathered while I was in Liberia for my thesis. I had originally included my field notes in the appendix, but I have decided not to do this to ensure the anonymity of LAPS and the villagers in the communities best possible.

I do not think that LAPS risk any dangers or compromising issues following from the thesis. Part of LAPS’ work is to be visible in the context they work in and to use it for advocacy on a policy level. It is a question of ethical conduct from my side to inform LAPS and reach consent. I have all along planned to involve LAPS and DIGNITY in the findings and offer a more focused and accessible version of the results. If possible I would like to present some of the findings in an open discussion with interested parts.

³ Raymond Williams speak of *emergent* as substantially alternative or oppositional to the dominant culture instead of merely a new phase. The two are exceptionally difficult to distinguish (1977: 123).

CHAPTER 4: THEORY

FAIRCLOUGH'S CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Along with the development from positivism to social constructionism discourse as object of analysis has received increased attention. Language has received an acknowledged and significant role in the production and constitution of meaning (Jørgensen and Phillips 1999). Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and socialist strategy* (1985) represents a main work within discourse analysis but in contrast to critical discourse analysis Laclau and Mouffe represents a direction in discourse analysis, which sees all social phenomena as expressions of discourse. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis on the other hand sees discourse as limited to text and speech and in continuous dialectical relation to other social phenomena that are discursive or non-discursive. The social structures are the condition for and an effect of social practice. Language being one kind of social practice is therefore confined and shaped by social structure but at the same time it is socially constitutive and carries the potential to transform structure. Discourse is according to Fairclough socially and historically situated and contributes to the construction and reproduction of social identities, relations and systems of knowledge- and belief. It is the hegemonic battle over meanings that are sought enlightened in discourse theory.

Fairclough's theory relates to interpersonal functions and meanings and ideational functions and meanings. The interpersonal level is divided into two further categories; the construction and representation of 1. Social identities and 2. Social relations. They relate to how 'the self' is constructed and manifested in text and how social relations are exercised and constructed in texts. The ideational dimension is occupied with the construction of systems of knowledge and belief. The three categories overlap each other and cannot be completely separated.

As mentioned in the delimitations paragraph I am aware that Fairclough is suited and often used for detailed linguistic analysis, which is not the aim of this thesis. I have chosen Fairclough's theory because it also encompasses other dimensions than the strict linguistic analysis. Like Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis

(1985) it builds on the work by Foucault and thereby sees power relations as essential in the construction and reproduction of discourses. Furthermore Fairclough emphasizes the potentiality of social change through discourse which implies a dynamic view on agency thereby adding a transformative dimension to discourse which is relevant in the exploration of my research question.

I have also worked with Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis (1985) during the thesis process, but the fact that they do not accept the distinction between a discursive and a non-discursive level but see everything as constituted by discourse kept interrupting with my perspective of the social. I am therefore not using their theory as foundation but rather as a supplement. The theory has provided me with insight into relevant terms and understandings in discourse analysis from which I use the concept of nodal points and the conceptualization of hegemony as explained below.

Below I will use both Fairclough (1992) and Laclau and Mouffe (1985) to outline a conceptualization of what a discourse is and how I understand the term discourse in this thesis. I use both theories to be able to draw on different terms and descriptions of the concept and thereby establish a more general and operational definition of what a discourse is.

WHAT IS (A) DISCOURSE?

Language is not an individual activity or a reflex of situational variables Fairclough argues. Language is one form of social practice. It is constructed and it co-constructs the social world around it. Language becomes discourse when: "a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning" can be identified (Fairclough, 1992: 64). In the process of constructing meaning discourse is inevitably bound to structure. Shaped and constrained by it and at the same time constituting it. Class, education, institutional rationalities, systems of classification, norms and conventions all play into the structural determination of a discourse. The dialectical relation implies that discourse at the same time as being directly or

indirectly shaped and constrained by social structure also contributes to the constitution of all those dimensions. Discourse is a mode of action where we collectively reproduce or transform the world around us and a mode of representation where relations, subjects and identities are constructed (Fairclough 1992).

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) build on a Saussurean universe seeing language as a pattern of signs structured like a fish net. But instead of defining language structurally as a fixed set of signs in a certain structure (as Saussure did) their approach emphasize the relational and never stable aspect of language.

“The practice of articulation therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity.”

(Laclau and Mouffe 1985 :113).

A discourse establishes a fixed meaning but it can never be definitive. It seeks to put a temporary stop to the fluctuations in the meaning of the signs, but it can always be dissolved, changed and challenged. When establishing a discourse there is an exclusion of all other possible meanings that these signs could have had. It can therefore be said that a discourse is a reduction of possibilities. There is a surplus of meaning that is excluded in a discourse which can intrude the discourse at any given time (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Some fixations of meaning become so conventionalized that we think of them as natural (Fairclough 1992; Jørgensen & Phillips 1999). It is the hegemonic structures surrounding discourse and the social struggles to fix meaning at all levels of the social that discourse analysis seeks to unfold.

From this we can say that a discourse is an unstable fixation of meaning in areas where different meanings compete to be superior. Discourse is never definitive but always open for intrusion of other possibilities of meaning. The discursive field or orders of discourse defines the discourses competing to be superior in a specific field.

This means that a discourse is a particular way of constructing content and that content or areas of knowledge can only enter text and speech in the mediated form of particular social constructions. These constructions have implications upon social life as well as social life affects discursive constructions.

HEGEMONY

Hegemony is an important concept in discourse analysis. For Laclau and Mouffe the concept is essential in their theory. They build their conceptualization of hegemony on the theories formed by Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Building on Marxist class theory Gramsci explains how the absence of revolution is due to the bourgeoisie's success in securing consent to a certain social order. This is done not solely through military, political and economic power but also through ideology. The hegemonic culture, Gramsci argue, promotes its own values and norms until they become naturalized 'common sense' for all people. Through intellectual and moral leadership and important alliances in society the ruling class can uphold status quo. What then becomes 'ordinary social order' produces and reproduces the hegemony of the dominant class through a nexus of institutions, social relations and ideas (Fairclough 1992; Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Fairclough takes the same position as his point of departure and uses the concept to highlight the struggles over discourse that take place in social spheres. Hegemony "is never achieved more than partially and temporarily, as an 'unstable equilibrium'" Fairclough states (1992: 92). 'The orders of discourse' is his conceptualization of the struggles that take place within a specific terrain of meaning. In this thesis *the orders of discourse* covers the multiple possible discourses in post-conflict language. There might be overlapping discourses from other terrains as for example the field of development studies. The fact that there are many discourses at play in a field does not mean that they are all accessible. The hegemonic structures limit the different accessible discourses for different agents (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999: 85). This makes it interesting to look at the discourses and actors at play in a field of meaning-making which is the purpose of this thesis.

The theoretical concepts and definition of discourse as described in this section serves to clarify my research question. When the theoretical perspective is integrated with my research question the terms 'position' and 'possibilities of action' are operationalized like this:

1. LAPS position themselves in their discursive practice by intentionally drawing on specific discourses at the same time as they constitute other discourses in their discursive practice by drawing on the social practice they are situated in and acts upon.

2. LAPS' possibilities of actions can be constituted, constrained and transformed by the orders of discourse and by the social practice and it is the dialectical relationship back and forth between the two that constitute social life.

It is these processes that are explored and unfolded in the analysis that follows.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS I

DISCOURSES AND POSITIONS IN THE BOOK

In this first part I analyze LAPS' discursive practice and the book as the communicative activity. In the discursive practice I analyze the book's foreword. Following I analyze the four other excerpts from the book as representative of the communicative activity. I explore LAPS' discursive practice by seeking out the discourses and nodal points that appear in the foreword upon which LAPS build their intervention. This is done through the theoretical concepts of interdiscursivity and intertextuality. The text level is analyzed through the identification of object and subject positions in order to explore the construction of identities and relations through the concept of interactional control and agency. The purpose of part one of the analysis, is to answer the first sub question.

DISCURSIVE PRACTICE

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

The foreword is the last thing that was written for the book. It is written exclusively by the director of LAPS and constitutes a meta-level explaining the internal content of the book at the same time as it draws external references to internationally renowned discourses. In the following I will present pieces of text from the foreword of the book with the purpose of tracing intertextual chains, nodal points and interdiscursivity. The words I have chosen to analyze are related to the field of post-conflict and transitional justice. My selection therefore rest on this perspective whereas other frameworks would have emphasized different words and meanings. To give an example an organizational or management

perspective would probably have been concerned with the words *mission*, *promoting* and *facilitating*. I have marked my selection of words in bold.

“In the **post war recovery effort** of our country, the Liberia Association of Psychosocial services (LAPS), along with its partners and the local communities, has embarked on a mission of promoting **reconciliation** and **peaceful** coexistence. We aim at facilitating **healing** in the lives of communities that suffered torture and mass killings of its citizens during the past civil war in Liberia.”
(p. 3 l. 2-7)

In this first sentence of the book the director of LAPS situates the organization, the intervention and the book in a post-war setting. By using the words *post-war recovery effort* he states that we are situated in a temporal linear context defined by a peaceful past, a war and a present post-war setting. This temporal framework indicates that conflict is temporary and peace is possible. This view is contested by theorists arguing that crisis can be the chronic state of everyday life (Vigh 2008) which is a non-existing perspective of post-conflict interventions. In this context *post-war* becomes a nodal point because central meanings are attached to the term throughout the book. It is within this point in time and space that the discourses presented in the text unfold and it is with a naturalized belief that conflict is temporary and peace is the stable condition of life. It ties the other nodal points into a temporal structure that helps stabilize meaning. The next essential word is *reconciliation*. But what is reconciliation? In this context the concept of *reconciliation* is positioned in an intertextual chain of proceeding experiences and ideas of transitional justice (Hayner 2011; Kelsall 2005; Renner 2014). *Peaceful coexistence* is a nodal point in connection to the discourse on reconciliation since essential meaning is established when *peace* is attached to *reconciliation*. It forms a discourse that justice is reached through the peaceful actions of forgiveness and healing. Not revolution, revenge or retributive justice. In the reconciliation discourse the only subject positions available are within a spectrum of peaceful and forgiving approaches as put forward by Desmond Tutu and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa, which since has been claimed for carrying Christian, religious notions not necessarily serving the purpose of reconciliation for all (Renner 2014).

The next word is *healing*. Healing is also attached to reconciliation and peace. Likewise *healing* can only be reached through the combined effort of *promoting reconciliation and peaceful coexistence* as described in the first two sentences above. In this way reconciliation, peace and healing are all nodal points creating a pattern of meaning where one cannot be reached without the other. They all stand in opposition to the violent past, the mass killings and torture. By representing the opposite they establish a pattern of meaning that is hard to argue. Reconciliation, peace and healing are essential in LAPS' effort to stabilize meaning through the production of the book "Our Stories – Our healing for the future" and as the very first sentences they set a framework for the rest of the text.

LOCALIZED HEALING

In the following paragraphs of the foreword the director of LAPS describe what LAPS has done in order to facilitate healing. The important sentences are underlined.

"The experiences of mass killings and massacres were documented and traditional, cultural and religious ceremonies in accordance with each community's belief systems were carried out with the aim of "respecting and appeasing the spirits of the dead" as well as, "offering protection and blessing to the living".
(p. 3 l. 15-19)

The 'traditional, cultural and religious ceremonies in accordance with each community's belief systems' is situated in an intertextual chain referring to localized, contextualized and ritualized interventions as described by the authors Honwana (1997), Stovel (2008) and Graybill (2004) among others. Healing is an essential nodal point in this context since it gives purpose to the many different kinds of localized and ritualized interventions in post-conflict settings. The discourse is based on the idea that everything is situated and context driven which means that an imported Truth and Reconciliation Commission model might not be the best way to solve tensions and conflicts in local settings. The discourse can be viewed as a challenge or a supplement to the universal model and institutionalization of transitional justice and reconciliation. We are still within the

spectrum of peaceful and forgiving approaches, which speaks to the discourse as a supplement to transitional justice. The interesting part is the citation marks that are used to describe what role the spirits play in the objective of the ceremony. This is an example of manifest intertextuality. LAPS use the citation marks to show that this is a statement from the villagers. This example of manifest intertextuality is not in the form of a direct textual reference, but refers to verbal testimonies from the villagers. It is used to create a voice in the text. A voice from the rural, traditional communities stating that they believe in the spirits and that the spirits have power over the communities. By using manifest intertextuality LAPS put a distance between the local communities and themselves. This is interesting viewed in the light that most of the members of LAPS' staff comes from these villages and surroundings themselves. It is hard to believe that they do not have any of the same beliefs as the communities from which they originate or are affiliated to through dialect and ethnic kin. I will return to this point in the analysis of the text level and the conclusion on LAPS' discursive practice.

TESTIMONIAL THERAPY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

In the next excerpt words related to human rights and the psycho-social method; testimonial therapy are emphasized in bold and analyzed.

Apart from oral accounts there is little or no available written records of the past war time experiences of the project communities in Lofa County. And so, the stories of **human rights abuses**, including **torture** that are found within this book, are individual and community **testimonies** that were carefully explored and recorded. The '**truth**' of each story was investigated carefully through various **stakeholders** and narrators gave their consent for the stories to be published.”
(p. 3 l. 20-27)

In the first sentence it is said that there is little or no written records of the war time experiences in Lofa County which explains the need for the community testimonies printed in the book but the word *testimonies* signify certain methods and procedures in storytelling. If the use of the word *testimonies* referred to an intertextual chain of testimonial therapy which is a used method in post-conflict settings and in the work with torture survivors (see Agger & Raghuvanshi 2008

among others) the word *truth* would not be mentioned. Testimonial therapy is a personal and politically empowering process defined by the subjective feeling of violence and oppression (ibid). There is no *truth* and no *stakeholders*. It is therefore problematic when the process is described in terms of verification. But since LAPS' intervention is different from individual counselling and testimonial therapy the method might have transformed into something different still carrying the same purpose as testimonial therapy or it could be that the term *testimonies* signifies an adopted discourse that is misleading in relation to the intervention's method and purpose.

In the same paragraph the director explicitly mentions *human rights abuses* where he could have said violence, mass killings or massacres which are the words used to describe the incidents elsewhere in the book and in common speech in the project. The interdiscursivity of *human rights* originates from the intertextual chain developed from The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948). Since the declaration was made tons of written and practical work has built upon and been legitimized by human rights. To specify the discourse on human rights in this context *torture* appears as a nodal point. It is a nodal point because specific meaning is fixed in the term. *Torture* speaks directly to DIGNITY as donor and other possible donors within the work of rehabilitation and prevention of torture. If it had said child soldiers different meanings would be evoked and different actors as PLAN or UNICEF would have been attentive. Had it said trafficking yet another set of actions and meanings would be attached to the word and different international NGO's would have been receptive and so on. The term *torture* is directed specifically at the donor of the book and the Community Healing intervention; DIGNITY.

The foreword continues in line with the reconciliation discourse as seen where I have underlined the sentences. I have emphasized a term in bold that I will touch upon in the end.

“Therefore, information in this book is not meant to be used in a court of law against individuals suspected of perpetrating the human rights abuses that are described within it but instead, it should be used to discourage and prevent future violence.

This book is written to **bring to light** some of the main brutal war-time experiences and the general devastating damages and other impacts that were felt by the post conflict communities of Lofa county during and after the war.”
(p. 3-4 l. 28-4).

The underlined phrases in this text passage refer back to the intertextual chain on reconciliation. Forgiveness and restorative justice is in focus at the same time as the term ‘human rights abuses’ help to emphasize the intervention as part of a human rights discourse. Again the subject positions are minimized and the book’s purpose is explicitly limited to function within the discourse of reconciliation. No justice in a court of law can be sought with this book. So what can this book do? It says it can ‘bring to light some of the main brutal war-time experiences ...’, but with what purpose? The director does not speak about bringing about healing he speaks about ‘bringing to light’ the history of four communities in Lofa County. In testimonial therapy it would make sense to ‘bring to light’ stories of violence and torture with the subjective purpose of healing the soul and empower people to mobilize or move on. In human rights it would make sense to ‘bring to light’ stories of human rights abuse and torture with the purpose of seeking justice. In transitional justice it would make sense to ‘bring to light’ stories of victims and perpetrators to make people reconcile with the past. The meaning of the sentence can be many it depends on the audience of the book and it is not clear in the last phrase of the foreword who the audience is.



In LAPS’ discursive practice as analyzed through the foreword of the book “Our Stories, Our Healing for the future” the executive director of LAPS draw on an assemblage of internationally recognized discourses in relation to psycho-social work in post-conflict interventions. LAPS construct meaning by drawing on a

discourse on transitional justice and reconciliation, a discourse on localized healing, a discourse on testimonial therapy and a human rights discourse on torture.

Furthermore there is an incident of manifest intertextuality in the discourse on localized healing where LAPS use the discursive practice to establish a distance in the identity and relation between themselves and the communities.

TEXT LEVEL

In the text I am chronologically analyzing the excerpts from the book following the foreword. I explore the construction of social relations and identities through the concepts of interactional control and ethos. Furthermore I connect the text analysis to the discursive practice by showing the connections to the discourses and nodal points presented in the foreword.

THE SPIRITS

The text excerpt following the foreword is the chapter “Why community healing?” where it is described why LAPS is involved in collective community healing instead of individual healing or alternative approaches. The excerpt goes further into the spiritual aspect of the intervention that was shortly mentioned in the foreword and a new subject emerges. The subjects are emphasized in thick and important modalities are underlined in relation to LAPS’ relation to the spirits.

“As they say; **the spirits** needs to be put at rest, and it is the responsibility of the family and/or neighbors to do this. **LAPS** became aware of a local belief that states that, the dead must be given a proper burial ritual for the living to be able to establish a positive relationship with them. During the war many victims were not buried. If **the spirits** are not put at rest, it is believed, **the spirits** are unsettled and unhappy and **they** potentially will haunt the villagers and even cause problems such as sickness or small yield of their common crops”. Moreover, the view is not, for the bones to be exhumed from the ground and buried in a graveyard but, that **the spirits** are honoured and respected and put at rest through local ceremonies and religious customs. Symbolic cleansing of the sites of massacres is seen as necessary before the villagers can resume a normal life. It is based on the belief that **ancestors, spirits and gods** live in another world and can affect the lives of the living. **The ancestors** are both appeased in case they are offended, and petitioned to support as well as protect their descendants.”

(p. 10-11 l. 25-6).

The spirits and ancestors occur as subjects seven times in these 18 lines of the book. The spirits will *haunt and cause problems*, they can *affect the lives of the living* and *they need to be put at rest*, it says in the text. It is presented to us that

the overarching problem and cause of sickness, poverty and bad harvests for the villagers of this post-conflict setting is that the spirits of the deceased are not put at rest. Neither LAPS nor the communities are in control of the spirits. An apolitical terrain of healing appears where none of the two agents are really in control.

In the second sentence it is described that “LAPS *became* aware of a local belief” stating that LAPS did not know of the local beliefs before entering the community work. LAPS consist mostly of staff originating from these rural parts or the regions surrounding. As employee you must speak the dialect in the communities and the director of LAPS is likewise affiliated through ethnic kin to some of the communities. It would be very strange if they did not have the same belief or at least know of it. The term ‘became aware’ indicates a distancing from the traditional beliefs and from the communities. Furthermore throughout the text excerpt the spirits are spoken about in a passive mode: “a local belief that states”, “it is believed”, “the view is not”, “is seen as necessary” and “it is based on the belief”. All are phrases that leaves the agency of the belief in the spirits invisible. There is an unclarity to whom these statements belong, which gives another indication that LAPS wish to distance themselves from the local belief in spirits.

In the analysis of this text part it is clear that the spirits have an influence on the agenda of the community healing project. The spiritual reburials achieves meaning and purpose from its’ affiliation to healing as a nodal point. The reburials would not be conducted if they did not match LAPS aim of facilitating healing. Furthermore they would not be conducted if they were not subordinate to the discourse on reconciliation and connect to peace as a nodal point.

In the analysis it is furthermore evident that LAPS seek to distance themselves from the local, traditional beliefs of the rural communities they work in. LAPS thereby build an ethos in opposition to the rural Liberia.

LAPS AS SUBJECT

In this excerpt from “LAPS’ method and collaborative activities with the project communities” LAPS present how they approach the field and present the community healing project to the participants. I have emphasized the subjects in thick and underlined the verbs in order to analyse the construction of LAPS’ identity and relation to the communities.

“**LAPS** began by selecting the intervention communities based on the stories of the war-time suffering and on the present day tensional level of conflicts, mistrust and divisions among and, within the communities. In order to build trust between LAPS and the project communities a process called “Community entry” was initiated as the first step. During the community entry period, **LAPS** introduced the project and the expected respective roles of the communities and LAPS. In addition, a “Community awareness campaign” was facilitated in each project community during which time, clarifications were made on what **LAPS** can and cannot do and participants were allowed to make comments and/or ask questions. Through this process, **LAPS** gradually built rapports with the communities. As the initial trust was built, it was continuously nurtured by **LAPS’ staff** throughout the project period by carefully observing ethical behavior and being sensitive to the relationships among and within community members as well as, the staff’s own commitments to the job and lives as role models in the communities.”
(p. 12 l. 5-22).

In the chapter explaining LAPS’ method the organization is assigned the following attributes: offer, find, reveal, select, initiate, introduce, expect, facilitate, nurture and observe. Some of them are mentioned in the excerpt above. LAPS is the active subject and the communities appear as passive. LAPS is in a strong position of control throughout the excerpt for example in the first sentence where it is described how they select the intervention sites based on the degree of suffering and tensions. LAPS decide how much suffering it takes in order to be accepted as receiver of their intervention. Following the selection they *initiate*, *introduce* and *facilitate*. Actions that signify a process where the communities are passive recipients instead of active participants. In one sentence it is described that the “participants were allowed to...” stressing the passivity of the communities and LAPS’ interactional control.

In the analysis of this excerpt LAPS build an ethos of a strong, active and competent NGO. The relation to the communities is marked by strong interactional control from LAPS' side.

TESTIMONIES AND INTERVIEWS

The text continues and describes the process of conducting the interviews. In the foreword and the subtitle of the book the term testimonies is used but in this description it is called interviews:

“The IST’s made appointment with the said selected persons for **interviews**. During the **interview**, three IST’s (**interviewers**) were present: one facilitator and two co-facilitators. The facilitator conducted the **interview** and the co-facilitators did the audio recording, photo taking and/or interacted directly with the **interviewee** or helped to do interpretation – as the need arised.”
(p. 12 l. 27-33)

The process resembles interviews more than testimonies. If the interviews were supposed to function as a healing process it seems far from the description in the method. There is a mechanical feel to the description more like a gathering of data than a personal process of catharsis. This is in line with the analysis of the foreword that showed an ambiguous or twisted version of the testimonial therapy discourse.

Furthermore there are no ethical considerations in the book about interviewing the witnesses or reflections on the villagers' reactions to giving testimony. These aspects of the data collection indicate that there is not much healing to the process. Even the stories about the violence and massacres told by the community members can be said to be selected and modified by LAPS.

The interviews were transformed into summaries. And the multiple stories from eye witnesses were then processed into one anonymous common story for the community. LAPS is in control of this process since they decide the final storyline. Even though they seek to ‘verify’ the stories there is no direct speech from community members in the book, which means that their individual voices are not represented. There is a collective story, which may carry other important

aspects than what testimonial therapy claims to do but in relation to the discourse on testimonial therapy it can be said that it is partly present but in a twisted version.

THE VICTIMS OF A MASSACRE

I have analysed one of the summarized stories about a massacre in Tenebu community taking place in 1995. Throughout the text the communities are the victims and the rebels or the attackers are the perpetrating subjects. There are four stories in the book all with the same structure of victims and perpetrators.

”Between 7:00-8:00 am, **the attackers** who called themselves "Grasshoppers" *showed* themselves and *captured* the rest of the community members who were alive. **The attackers** *gathered* the rest of the town’s inhabitants and *accused* them of supporting their enemy – the ULIMO rebel faction, who they said was using Tenebu as their base. For this and other reasons, **they** *killed* almost all of the captives with the use of knives and other silent weapons. Some were *slaughtered*, *hit* or had their skull *burst* with axes, some were deeply *cut* in different parts of the body and few *were shot* as they tried to escape. Some of the captives pretended to be dead after being beaten or stabbed. Others were unconscious due to excessive bleeding and were thought to be dead. Most of the people who escaped through the bushes died due to excessive bleeding from gun wounds.”
(p. 24 L. 19-32).

The subject positions are divided into perpetrators and victims in this story. The attackers are the subjects who *showed*, *captured*, *gathered*, *killed*, *slaughtered*, *hit*, *burst*, *cut*, *shot*. All actions related to the inhumane killings. There is no view into the perpetrators as humans with feelings, reasons or doubt. This is a story from the perspective of the victims. It builds an ethos of the victims as the ones suffering, the ones in need. No actions are ascribed to the victims except for the sentence: “the captives pretended to be dead...” which leaves some agency in the hands of the survivors.

The story is constructed from the victim’s point of view and speaks about the ‘human rights abuses’ mentioned in the foreword but the term human right is not used. The community is in a passive position controlled by the attackers. The

analysis shows that the community's ethos is constructed as one of suffering and loss.

THE COMMITTEES

The text excerpt from the chapter on the community healing ceremony consists of the two first lines of the chapter and a description of the need of committees two pages later. Much of the chapter is about the practical functions of the committees and how the ceremony is conducted. In this way the chapter overall presents a structure where the committees are the active, interacting subjects, but as seen in these excerpts LAPS still figures as the deciding and controlling subject and it can be questioned how profound the participation is.

”LAPS quickly *understood* and, *found* that there was a need to honor the victims of the war and give them a proper burial to help minimize some of the effects of the war and rebuild peace. Thus a ceremony was planned in each community to conduct the necessary rituals.” (p. 41 l. 3-7).

...
”The committees *were found important* because *they help to ensure a profound community involvement* and their related responsibilities, as well as, *help to avoid overlapping of functions*. Each committee will accurately list activities for the ceremony that they are responsible for, in line with the different religious and cultural beliefs. The committees also performed the roles of communicating relevant information to the members they represent.” (p. 43 l. 13-20).

The first piece of text supports LAPS' ethos as the active, knowing NGO. LAPS *understood* and *found* which indicates that LAPS have an understanding of the context and an empirical knowledge about the needs in the communities. This leads to a relevant and appropriate intervention thereby stressing LAPS as a competent and relevant NGO in post-conflict interventions. The purpose is to: “help minimize some of the effects of the war and rebuild peace” which again is understood in the light of the discourses presented in the foreword. The effects relate to issues that can be 'healed' and not effects that should be dealt with in a court of law, corruption in the government or other issues not related to the facilitation of healing. It refers to issues of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

In the next piece the verb 'found' is used again. If the sentence had said: 'the committees were important...' it would have a different meaning emphasizing the importance of the committees. Instead the sentence emphasize LAPS' interactional control and agency by using the verb 'found'. It is LAPS who find the committees important and they seem only to be important as long as LAPS thinks so. In the description of why LAPS use committees as a tool in the community healing project participation and management are mentioned as the main reasons. In the sentence the word 'help' figures as an important word in the construction of representation and relation. The committees are described as they '*help* to ensure profound community participation' not as they ensure profound community participation. And they '*help* to avoid overlapping of functions'. Ultimately it leaves agency and control in the hands of LAPS not in the hands of the committees. The community element in the form of participation and local control and knowledge seems non-existing in this representation or at least on a low level on the "ladder of citizen participation" (Arnstein 1969).

The analysis of the community healing ceremony and the role of the committees show that LAPS has a strong interactional control in the process. An ethos is build where the community participation is seemingly prioritized but it is undermined by elements in the text revealing that LAPS is in control.



The text analysis presents a discourse on localized healing connected to peace and reconciliation. There is an ambiguity to the discourse on testimonial therapy that is repeated from the foreword.

LAPS' ethos is constructed as the active, controlling and knowledgeable NGO in the field of post-conflict interventions. LAPS have gone through the more or less same experiences as the communities in the form of war, violence and refugee life and in many cases they also come from the same areas as the communities reside in. Still LAPS distance themselves from the community in their discursive

practice by distancing themselves from the traditional belief in spirits and ancestors.

The community's ethos is constructed as the ones suffering, as victims of violence, as passive recipients of LAPS' intervention and with strong rural ties to traditional beliefs in ancestors and spirits.

The relation between these two actors is defined by LAPS' interactional control.

Below I will sum up my empirical findings in relation to the first part of the analysis. The conclusion answers the first sub-question: *How does LAPS construct meaning in the discursive practice of their psycho social work through the production of the book "Our Stories, Our healing for the future"?*

Afterwards I will introduce analysis part II and in the end I conclude upon both parts of the analysis and answer my overall research question. Following the conclusion I will discuss the findings and make some final reflections in relation to the usefulness of the study.

GLOBAL DISCOURSES AND LOCAL POSITIONING

LAPS construct meaning by drawing on the internationally acknowledged discourses: transitional justice, reconciliation, human rights, localized healing and testimonial therapy. Further meaning is constructed if we sort the chapters in a temporal, linear order: First there is a war terrorizing a country and its population. The community members are victims of violent attacks, massacres and mass killings. Next there is a period of spirits terrorizing the lives of community members, stating that the community members are passive victims of the spirits evil will. Then LAPS comes with a solution to the problems. A healing ceremony is held and the deceased are buried and peace and harmony is restored by LAPS. The foreword is the linear conclusion to this story stating that *success* has been achieved from the localized, contextualized intervention (p. 3 l. 8).

The temporal linear perspective tells a story about an organization who is needed and who is qualified. The community members are mainly constructed as passive

support to the project. The audience of that story is not situated in the rural communities of Lofa County but is placed in the international humanitarian donor community, which means that LAPS construct an image of themselves as qualified receivers of funding.

The distance created between LAPS and the communities in the text helps to construct a professional image of LAPS. They distance themselves from the rural, 'uncivilized' parts of Liberia and they distance themselves from the role as passive victims of a war. A role that they have much in common with since they have been through some of the same experiences as the community members they work with

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS II

RESISTANCE AND NEGOTIATION IN THE FIELD

In this part I analyze my field notes from the four community meetings as representative of the social practice level in Fairclough's discourse analysis. The field notes offer a view into the social interactions in The Community Healing project. I will focus on the interpersonal aspects of discourse to see whether the identities and relations found in the text mirror the relations and identities at play in the field and whether the discourses presented in the text are present in the field notes. Quotes from the field notes refer to specific lines and can be found in Appendix 2.

SOCIAL PRACTICE

The broader context which situates LAPS' discursive practice is defined by two dimensions in the post-conflict setting of Liberia. One is the external world consisting of donors and the international community wanting to invest in the rebuilding of Liberia and secure peace and order. This world is at present the economic foundation of NGO's like LAPS. This balance might change but considering the country's present financial state the impact and power of foreign donors is quite large. The other dimension is the internal world consisting of the population of Liberia. They are the receivers of aid because they are defined as having needs, whether that is education, healing, peace or advocacy. In this case it is the rural population of Lofa County who is in need of reconciliation, peace and healing according to LAPS' discursive practice.

Both the external and internal dimension of LAPS' work is legitimized by the post-conflict situation. Of course there is also an aspect of the general level of poverty which influences the amount of humanitarian aid interventions and needs in the society. But in the case of the community healing project the intervention is legitimized by the implications assumed to be present in post-conflict countries (Pupavac 2004). This means that LAPS' discursive practice is influenced by the relations to the donor community in specific DIGNITY but also other potential donors in the field as viewed through the global agendas presented in the

discourses found in analysis part I. In this part I will focus on the internal ‘pressure’ on LAPS from below. How is meaning negotiated in the field and how does this affect LAPS’ discursive and social practice.

CONFLICTING MEANINGS EMERGING IN THE FIELD

The meaning established in the book is seemingly a coherent image of an intervention model in post-conflict Liberia which seeks to add value to the communities in Lofa County. When we explore the non-discursive level a more bruised and incoherent image occurs. Conflicts emerge and positions are negotiated.

At one meeting that I attended it was especially clear how the intervention model LAPS represent was subject to resistance and disagreement in the community. The people that were supposed to participate in the meeting acted out resistance in the form of not showing up at time. They were in the market selling and buying things and it was not until LAPS’ staff went out to tell them to come, that they reluctantly came to the memorial construction.

When people had gathered a loud discussion started mainly in the local dialect which meant that I only got the bits that the supervisor translated or summarized to me. Even though the discussion was centered around whether the community members would tell me their story from the war or not it seemed like I was invisible. The discussion seemed to be between LAPS and the community and internally between community members.

People start discussing why we are having this meeting and why they have to tell the story about the massacres in Tenebu again...There is no doubt that people are frustrated. All the women want to be at the market and furthermore a conflict erupted somewhere, which means that also the men wish to be other places solving more urgent matters. The supervisor doesn’t speak much. He lets people air their arguments, listens and in the end re-introduce his agenda and the necessity of the meeting. People speak in turn. There is a division between the people who support LAPS’s agenda and argue in favor of summarizing the massacres and the people who says that they do not want to talk about it again and argues that there are

everyday matters needed to take care of. One lady says she will be sad for the rest of the day if she has to tell the story again and be reminded of the atrocities experienced in the past. ... Discussions about whether to rip up in the past yet again or keep a distance to the hurtful memories are loud. Views from both sides are voiced while LAPS tries to mediate the discussion in favor of the planned program and their mandate to speak about the traumas to reach healing.
(Field notes 2013: 334-353)

With support from some of the community members the supervisor in LAPS leading the meeting, succeeds in pushing LAPS' agenda through and makes a deal with the women that they can go back to the market as soon as they have told the story. In line with the descriptions in the book there is not much testimonial therapy to trace in the whole act of talking about and recalling traumas. The structure of the meeting and the supervisor's role in leading the meeting give the impression that the community members are forced to tell their stories. The story is told in a mechanical way emphasizing that it is a job that has to be done: "The story was quickly told and it seemed like a recorder being turned on and afterwards turned off again." (Field notes 2013: 385-387). The women left the meeting quickly after.

The excerpt from my field notes shows the tensions in the relation between LAPS as the intervening part in a local setting and the people living in the communities, the participants and receivers of the intervention. The legitimization of LAPS' presence in the communities lies in the traumas of the war. Their mandate is to facilitate healing in the form of recalling and documenting the traumas. The staff is dependent on this job and maybe they also agree to the method. From this excerpt of my field notes it is clear that they are busy confirming each other that it is the correct approach also when they are not confronted with the communities:

They (supervisor and field staff from Tenebu) told me afterwards that there were some tensions in the community and that it was important to stress that it was good to talk about the massacres even though it hurt, which was also why they stressed this in the meeting.
(Field notes 2013: 401-403).

The encounter in Tenebu Community shows how demands from an NGO can be subject to resistance. The intervention model of recalling and talking about

traumas is not accepted by everyone. Since the reburials and building of the memorial construction is talked about in more positive turns (Field notes 2013: 283-287 and 439-443) it could suggest that the discourse on testimonial therapy is not very popular or relevant in this setting. The ambiguity in the descriptions of testimonies in the book is also present in the communities. The conflicting meanings open up space for negotiation and positioning. The community members can use this space to negotiate other needs and negotiate their subordinate position in relation to LAPS. If the community does not agree to cooperate and accept LAPS' intervention, LAPS cannot succeed to fulfill the aims of the project. Without the community's participation LAPS cannot pursue their aims and they are left without work to do and perhaps financial support from donors. The communities legitimize LAPS' existence and presence in Lofa County in relation to the Community Healing project.

The resistance in the community signal interactional control on the community's behalf. They can oppose the idea of talking about the traumas, coping through crying and adhere to 'orders' from LAPS. There can be many reasons why the community does not wish to talk about the war this day or in this forum. In this particular incident it is clear that there are other needs that are more urgent and they simply do not wish to participate on the premise laid out by LAPS.

In this perspective the intervention can be seen as a platform for negotiation between LAPS and the community. Local needs and demands can be put forward to allow LAPS access to the situated local knowledge (Greenwood & Levin 2007) and participation that they seek. As seen at the meeting in Kambolahun the town chief takes the opportunity of LAPS' presence to express the community's needs:

“The town chief explains how the village was a battleground and a lot of dead rebels were thrown in the water. Therefore the water is polluted. It is bad, he says. The town chief asks if LAPS can help build a pump and a latrine since it is very much needed in the village. The supervisor replied that it was out of LAPS’ capacity to get involved in matters like that, but he would present the request to the management, since it was important to take demands from the community serious.”
(Field notes 2013: 250-255).

The spiritual aspect is brought forth once again as a catalyst of needs and demands as seen in the book related to the desired reburials. Other demands were also presented at the meetings in the other communities for example in the form of skills training, teaching in conflict resolution, physical spaces for gatherings and common activities to keep people busy and cooperating. This means that when intervening in local settings local and immediate demands are put forward. A process of mediation begins between what LAPS can offer and what the community can use. The healing ceremony can be described as an outcome of this process – A wish from the communities to bury their deceased and the possibility for LAPS to engage in a localized, contextualized and ritualized process which they can argue lead to some degree of healing. As stated by a member of the peacebuilding committee in Kambolahun:

“LAPS allowed us to do exactly how we wanted to do it – as we were supposed to do. Before there was no understanding and no peace. Today we can sit and discuss, play sports and handle conflicts.”
(Field notes 2013: 240-242)

The quote relates to the reburials which the communities conducted in accordance with their different religious and cultural beliefs. As it shows the community members express appreciation for aspects of the intervention, which refers to localized, ritualized parts where the community members experience that they have influence.

In another quote a town hall representative at the meeting in Foya picks up the opposite psycho-social model than what LAPS represents and speaks about forgetting the traumas. A view which was also present in the discussion presented above.

The town hall representative starts talking about skills training. Teaching skills to avoid prostitution is important for the children. After having received such training many children have returned home, so now the women are not more alone. Now they can 'forget' sometimes. --- If you want someone to forget you must keep them busy. After the ceremony we need to ensure people are working together. We need common activities.

(Field notes 2013: 291-302)

The quote shows an emphasis upon active functions and common participation as a way of dealing with the past. The ceremony had these elements since many inhabitants had specific functions in the common preparation of the ceremony. The town hall representative uses the meeting with LAPS to put his demand forward in the hope that LAPS can support his case. This is in line with what LAPS told me that they will consider doing in the future. They would like to support the communities in rebuilding and conducting their common farming as an activity that can gather the communities and create economic and social output.

Below I will sum up the empirical findings in the second part of the analysis in order to answer my second sub-question: *Where do conflicting meanings emerge in the relation between the communities and LAPS in the social practice of The Community Healing project?*

A PLATFORM OF NEGOTIATION

Conflicting meanings emerge when LAPS' mandate and legitimization is questioned by the community. Resistance is shown in relation to the psycho-social model of recalling traumas and the discourse on testimonial therapy and support is seen in relation to the locally, rooted healing ceremony. The possible conflicts where LAPS demands certain actions from the community can be used as a platform of negotiation. In this context the communities are not passive receivers but capable agents that use LAPS' presence as a space to negotiate local demands. This means that the interactional control is more equally divided in the social practice than displayed in the discursive practice and that the communities' ethos

is more nuanced and active than the one of victimization and passivity constructed in the book.

I will conclude on Analysis Part I and II below in order to answer my research question: *How does the Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services position itself through the book “Our Stories, Our Healing for the future” and what are the possibilities of action within this position in The Community Healing project in Lofa County?*

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

GLOBAL AGENDAS AND LOCAL NEEDS

In the discursive practice there is an overall linear, temporal framework defining the social practice. As stated in the beginning of the analysis the concept of transition achieves meaning from the assumption that conflict is temporal and post-war interventions are therefore needed to reach peace, which build an argument that it is needless to question the intervention in the first place. The analysis shows that the transitional framework is defined by the hegemonic discourse on reconciliation limiting all subject positions to be situated within the spectrum of peace and forgiveness. The accessible discourses within this spectrum are in LAPS' discursive practice: human rights, localized healing and testimonial therapy.

At present the communities' only possibility of negotiation and demands lie within these discourses. As viewed in the analysis localized healing is the discourse put forward by the community since it carries the biggest chance for the community to broaden and define it in their own terms. In this way the communities and LAPS help constitute a discourse on localized healing. The negotiation of local demands can at the same time as it is constrained by the discourse on transitional justice and reconciliation help broaden or transform the discourse on transitional justice and reconciliation to encompass more local and material needs as for example the reburial ceremony.

The discourse on human rights is not explicitly present in the community and it is neither explicitly present in the book except from in the foreword. This indicates that the discourse has an insignificant relevance for the communities and the staff working in the communities. The discourse' only purpose is therefore to attract an external audience without connecting much to deeper meanings of the social practice.

The ambiguous discourse on testimonial therapy as presented in the book shows in the communities in the form of resistance and conflict. The discourse might transform into something different in time or simply disappear because it has no resonance in the social practice.

To sum up LAPS is situated in a continuum split between on the one side reconciliation and human rights as put forth in the discursive practice and on the other side localized healing as put forth in the social practice in the communities. Testimonial therapy and thereby the purpose of the book “Our Stories, Our healing for the future” is placed somewhere in between signifying a clash between specific donor demands and the needs and culture in the local communities.

The hegemonic discourse on reconciliation and transitional justice is almost invisible and impossible for LAPS to oppose. This means that LAPS needs to navigate within the borders of reconciliation where there is no space for discussing e.g. structural violence, poverty, retributive justice or political repression. The platform of negotiation in the interaction between the communities and LAPS is to some extent fruitful and made possible by the presence of local interventions but it is limited to demands and actions within the externally defined umbrella of reconciliation and transitional justice.

The conclusion to the research question therefore is that LAPS is situated within the paradigm on transitional justice and reconciliation. Within this paradigm LAPS position itself in relation to an external audience by constituting discourses on human rights, localized healing and testimonial therapy through their discursive practice, the book. It can be argued that this position is necessary to reach legitimacy and get financial support to be able to do local interventions. Within this position their best possibility of action seems to be through the discourse on localized healing.

So what is the purpose of the book? This perspective leaves the book as a tool of funding instead of a tool of healing. For DIGNITY the book becomes a tool of evaluation or measurement needed in a business where evidence in results is demanded. For LAPS the book seems to become a tool of funding to show external donors, a fulfillment of donor demands and only subsidiary a tool of healing for the communities. This might explain the ambiguity in the content and purpose of the book.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

Based on the conclusion of the analysis I would like to take some of the issues a little further and broaden out the reflections in relation to the dialectical relationship between LAPS' social and discursive practice where they seem to inhabit a middle ground. Furthermore I would like to discuss the textually constructed distance that LAPS show in relation to the communities to reflect upon LAPS' role as psycho social counsellors in a context where they themselves have experienced the same atrocities as those they are set out to explore and confront.

TRANSLATORS AND HYBRID HEALERS

The middle ground that LAPS is struggling to define and act in has been explained by Sally Engle Merry as a negotiation between global agendas and local needs (2006). The local NGO's inhabit a position where they are the ones to translate between the global level of discourses and the local level of needs. There is a vernacularization (Merry 2006: 39) taking place in local, social settings where internationally transplanted ideas and agendas are translated or adapted to specific situations of suffering and violations. This process can be traced in the hybrid models where imported ideas are merged with local structures to define an objective closer to the target population than the source of the idea. The process of *hybridity* (Merry 2006: 46) differs from *replication* where the aim, method and structure is imported from an external source but only content wise is defined by a local, cultural element. The discourses at play in the book "Our Stories, Our

Healing for the future” indicates a replication of the transnationally circling idea of reconciliation and human rights through an imported method: testimonial therapy but with a local cultural content in the form of the reburials at the community healing ceremony. Whether the project is closer to the target than the source of the ideas is hard to say and takes a close investigation through the lens of hybridity and replication. But it is clear that LAPS is in a middle position where they have to obey to international donor demands often brought forth by hegemonic discourses and at the same time navigate in a local space close to their own identity and origin where different demands occur.

This position affects the staff in LAPS in many ways. One way this can be viewed is through the constructed distance found in the text. The distancing from the rural population’s rationality might be ascribed to a wish to legitimize LAPS’ professional identity as a competent, civilized, modern NGO capable of implementing tools and ideas founded in global agendas. This is in line with a dominant social and political tendency in Liberia to emphasize a division between the rural parts and the urban, ‘civilized’ parts (Moran 2008). Another dimension is the rather close and sensitive relation LAPS have to the communities. A relation informed by the many resemblances between LAPS’ staff and the community members. The fact that many employees originate from the same region, speak the same dialect, have experienced the same war can generate a need for LAPS to establish themselves as different to the community members. In order to cope with stories and traumas from the war on an everyday basis they need to manage or cope with their own experiences from the war. For some the work has become a self-healing method of coping and dealing with the past as is also described by Abramowitz (2014). One staff member told me how he could not have another job. Even though he had been hired for a better paid job he ended up returning to LAPS to work with the local communities to be able to live with his own memories. For others it is necessary to establish a strict distance to the memories and the people they work with to cope with their own feelings in this work.

The ambiguous position for a staff member can be both a gift and an obstacle. They have a privileged position to access locations and work with the people but they end as hybrid healers trying to merge between their own lives and

experiences and the ones they become so deeply infiltrated in. As an organization positioned in the middle between donors and the local population LAPS is likewise both powerful and vulnerable. They are much needed as knowledge brokers but they are vulnerable to accusations of disloyalty to donor demands. Necessarily they have to manage an ambiguous loyalty which makes it a very sensitive and difficult position. They are the ones negotiating the middle in a field of power and opportunity (Merry 2006: 42). The opportunities available to LAPS can in the analysis be viewed as the platform of negotiation that appears in the social field between LAPS and the communities. The communities can put forth demands that no one else takes up and LAPS is the mediator of these demands. It constitutes a platform that would not be there if LAPS had not come. The reburials where a cow is needed along with other material resources can be viewed as a way of putting forth material needs that would not be acknowledged within the 'prism of trauma' (Pupavac 2004) had they not been able to connect it to the practice of healing, reconciliation and peacebuilding that constitute LAPS' legitimacy and mandate. In this way the intervention has a potential to transform external discourses into something relevant and useful in local terms by the mere presence of an NGO that is willing to discuss and negotiate as part of the collaboration with the communities.

Sally Engle Merry argues (2006) that the global field of reconciliation, human rights and trauma healing are actually 'circulating locals'. Meaning that ideas and methods developed in Western locations or transnational sites as the UN are spread around the world and starts circulating without being really 'global'. These 'circulating locals' establish discursive fields that determine which frameworks are available. Discourses are constructed that have a huge impact on the post-conflict field of interventions, ideas and actions and dominate the way we perceive, think and imagine change. Actors have unequal power to reshape these discursive fields. It is therefore necessary for LAPS to penetrate these discourses. The human rights conceptualization is a powerful language in this context (Merry 2006: 42) which is why the director of LAPS incorporates this language. By doing this he reaches legitimacy and possible influence in powerful circles. Still to change the framework takes a consciousness and an independence that is not

available to LAPS today unless they reach a much more powerful position. A position that might not exist as long as local NGO's are dependent on pleasing donor demands. Donors that are just as infiltrated in a determined framework that they consciously or unconsciously reproduce in their work with partners all around the world.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The findings of this study might seem evident, but I will argue that the systematical analysis of the book serves a purpose of questioning terms, concepts and assumptions that would have been taken for granted if one had read the book without this analysis at hand. As stated throughout the thesis the constitution of discourses and social structures is a dialectical relationship which means that it is very difficult to draw a line and define these processes. In this thesis I have sought to unfold a discursive process of positioning and how this position affects the space for actions in social practice in order to illustrate the complexity of discourses in the constitution of social life but also to emphasize the importance of staying critical and aware of the unconscious reproduction of hegemonic discourses.

As goes for transferability (Guba & Lincoln in Schwandt 2007: 299) I argue that there is a potential of transferring knowledge from this specific case study to settings alike since the discourses traced in the book carries significance for the whole field of development work in post-conflict locations. As goes for the meanings and interactions explored in the social field both LAPS and the communities share their conditions with many other NGO's and poor communities in other post-conflict settings, which speak to the fact that the resistance and negotiation taking place is not unique.

CHAPTER 9: FINAL REFLECTIONS

In order to conclude upon the findings and discussion I would like to end the thesis with some final reflections on the usefulness of the thesis.

I find that the analysis point to relevant reflections for both LAPS and DIGNITY. For LAPS it is essential to be aware of the discourses surrounding the field of post-conflict interventions. A conscious knowledge about the global agendas and local needs can help LAPS take an active stance in the mediation between the two. This is relevant in relation to reaching influence through advocacy which is a big part of LAPS' work and in relation to listening to community demands and create profound participation and social change. Furthermore it is essential that the choices made by the staff concerning a specific intervention are continuously informed by contextualized, local knowledge with a focus on the target group and the objectives of the intervention. If this process is transparent and the gained insights and knowledge is repeatedly shared and discussed in the organization it is easier for LAPS to negotiate donor demands and contribute to efficient tools of measurement. In this way LAPS can take a critical, reflective stance to transnational discourses with the potential to transform discourses to their own and the target groups' benefit.

I do not have insight into LAPS' internal organizational procedures and I therefore do not know their present reflections in this direction. They probably already have an on-going discussion of the problems and issues raised in this thesis since they are the ones navigating the middle.

In relation to DIGNITY the thesis carries the potential to discuss donor demands as constituting, constraining or transforming transnational discourses in the field of post-conflict interventions. Conscious reflections in relation to dominant discourses is necessary in DIGNITY to ensure which objectives DIGNITY support and why. For DIGNITY it can be useful to gain closer insight into the beneficiaries on the ground and the interactions between beneficiaries and partner organizations to explore patterns of resistance and participation. By increasing the organization's knowledge about what happens in the social and discursive practice

that their partner organizations operate in DIGNITY can improve its efficiency in setting up the right objectives and reaching the pursued aims of an intervention.

The thesis can function as a platform to explore DIGNITY's position in relation to reproducing discourses more or less consciously through donor demands and methods of evaluation and measurement. For DIGNITY it is relevant to be aware of which accessible subject positions they offer LAPS. It is therefore of shared interest to LAPS and DIGNITY to initiate, join or maintain a conscious, critical discussion about proposed objectives, means and methods in the light of the discourses presented in this thesis to be able to push or transform the discursive limits set by global agendas where it is needed. An open, earnest and critical environment and relation between LAPS and DIGNITY is a precondition for having these discussions, which makes the building of relationships between donor and partner an essential part of a professional, sensitive approach to development work.

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APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLE OF TEXT CODING

Text : Foreword (p. 3-4)	Subject	Object	Interdiscursivity	Interactional control	Nodal points	Manifest Intertextuality
In the post war recovery effort of our country, the Liberia Association of Psychosocial services (LAPS), along with its partners and the local communities, has embarked on a mission of promoting reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.	LAPS (and partners and local communities)	donors, international community,	peace and reconciliation = Transitional justice	meta speak to donors	reconciliation and peaceful coexistence	
We aim at facilitating healing in the lives of communities that suffered torture and mass killings of its citizens during the past civil war in Liberia.	LAPS - facilitate	donors, international community,		LAPS decide the intervention (what and where)	healing	
One of the many ways that success has been achieved out of this process is by offering safe spaces through which members of 'bereaved communities' were listened to while they narrated stories relating to the bitter past experiences of their communities; current impacts of those experiences and what can be done in the direction of facilitating healing for the communities in general.	LAPS - offer, listen to	donors, international community	testimonial therapy, participatory community work	LAPS describe the process as a succes (meta speak to donors). Community as victim	Healing	
The experiences of mass killings and massacres were documented and traditional, cultural and religious ceremonies in accordance with each community's belief systems were carried out with the aim of "respecting and appeasing the spirits of the dead" as well as, "offering protection and blessing to the living".	LAPS - documented	donors, international community	testimonial therapy, localized healing	the spirits		"respecting and appeasing the spirits of the dead", "offering protection and blessing to the living"
Apart from oral accounts there is little or no available written records of the past war time experiences of the project communities in Lofa County.	LAPS	donors, international community,	historical memory			
And so, the stories of human rights abuses, including torture that are found within this book, are individual and community testimonies that were carefully explored and recorded.	LAPS - explored, recorded	donors, international community,	human rights convention based discourse, testimonial therapy		torture	

The 'truth' of each story was investigated carefully through various stakeholders and narrators gave their consent for the stories to be published.	LAPS - investigated	donors, international community,			truth, stakeholders	
Please know that while the stories of the war-time incidents that are included in this book are "True Life stories", apart from the names of the warring factions, some effort has been made to intentionally leave out other details such as, individual names of suspected perpetrators and main victims.	LAPS	donors, international community + community members	reconciliation discourse	LAPS - select the history		
This was done to prevent revenge tendencies on perpetrators in the future as well as stigmatization of victims.	LAPS	donors, international community + local community members	reconciliation discourse	LAPS wants to prevent revenge and stigmatization (the difficult present and future)		
Therefore, information in this book is not meant to be used in a court of law against individuals suspected of perpetrating the human rights abuses that are described within it but instead, it should be used to discourage and prevent future violence.	LAPS - purpose of the book	donors, international community, national authorities	Transitional justice, reconciliation discourse, in opposition to accountability/ criminal court,	LAPS puts distance to retributive justice and emphasise reconciliation		
This book is written to bring to light some of the main brutal war-time experiences and the general devastating damages and other impacts that were felt by the post conflict communities of Lofa county during and after the war.	LAPS - write	donors, international community, the liberian state? Who needs to know about this?	social and historical memory, testimonial therapy	selection of history		
We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the community members, the local authorities and other stakeholders in- and outside of Lofa County, for their support that led to the success in the making of this book, including the entire project implementation.	LAPS - would like to thank	donors, community members, local authorities and other stakeholders	local, contextualized	LAPS speaks to a wider audience, they are dependent on other actors in the field, meta discourse (donor)		
We would also like to thank our international partners – mainly DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture who provided the funding for the project.	LAPS - would like to thank	donors, DIGNITY		dependency on DIGNITY (funding)		

APPENDIX 2: THE BOOK – “OUR STORIES, OUR HEALING FOR THE FUTURE”

**OUR STORIES,
OUR HEALING FOR THE FUTURE**
Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services

Our Stories, Our healing for the Future

Testimonies of Torture and Organized Violence from four districts in Lofa County experienced during the civil war in Liberia.

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Foreword

In the post war recovery effort of our country, the Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services (LAPS), along with its partners and the local communities, has embarked on a mission of promoting reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. We aim at facilitating healing in the lives of communities that suffered torture and mass killings of its citizens during the past civil war in Liberia.

One of the many ways that success has been achieved out of this process is by offering safe spaces through which members of 'bereaved communities' were listened to while they narrated stories relating to the bitter past experiences of their communities; current impacts of those experiences and what can be done in the direction of facilitating healing for the communities in general.

The experiences of mass killings and massacres were documented and traditional, cultural and religious ceremonies in accordance with each community's belief systems were carried out with the aim of "respecting and appeasing the spirits of the dead" as well as, "offering protection and blessing to the living".

Apart from oral accounts there is little or no available written records of the past war time experiences of the project communities in Lofa County. And so, the stories of human rights abuses, including torture that are found within this book, are individual and community testimonies that were carefully explored and recorded. The 'truth' of each story was investigated carefully through various stakeholders and narrators gave their consent for the stories to be published.

Please know that while the stories of the war-time incidents that are included in this book are "True Life stories", apart from the names of the warring factions, some effort has been made to intentionally leave out other details such as, individual names of suspected perpetrators and main victims. This was done to

1 prevent revenge tendencies on perpetrators in the future as well
2 as stigmatization of victims.

3 Therefore, information in this book is not meant to be used in a
4 court of law against individuals suspected of perpetrating the
5 human rights abuses that are described within it but instead, it
6 should be used to discourage and prevent future violence.

7 This book is written to bring to light some of the main brutal war-
8 time experiences and the general devastating damages and other
9 impacts that were felt by the post conflict communities of Lofa
0 county during and after the war.

1 We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the
2 community members, the local authorities and other stakeholders
3 in- and outside of Lofa County, for their support that led to the
4 success in the making of this book, including the entire project
5 implementation.

6 We would also like to thank our international partners – mainly
7 DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture who provided the
8 funding for the project.

0 With Regards

3 **Seidu Swaray DIP, BBA**

4 Executive Director

5 Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services (LAPS)

Acknowledgement

LAPS would like to thank the communities for opening their hearts and trusting LAPS with their stories of grief and loss. Without the will to share their memories and accept the support provided by LAPS the healing process would not be possible. LAPS is working with all members of a community, however some people are especially active in facilitating the healing process and making sure that it continues after LAPS withdraws. These people deserve special thanks and are listed below.

Barkedu community

Memorial committee	Healing Ceremony committee	Peace Building committee
Mamadee Teah	Abu M. Balloh	Fombah Massalay
Varfee S Teah	Va-Karmon M. Kanneh	Mamadee Fofana
Varlee K. Kamara	Alihaji Musa Teah	Makemen Kamara
Matelankee Kanneh	Mohammed Moiba Barwor	Ma-Makula Balloh
Abu L. Fofana	Foday Yankuba Dukuly	Mafatumata Dulleh
Fatta Sheriff	Mohammed Fofee Kanneh	Ma-moiday Kanneh
Momo Kanneh	Abu L. Balloh	Afred Kamara
Maboso Dulleh	Makemeh Dulleh	Mohammed Dulleh
Mawata Fofana	Mafamata Kanneh	Musa K. Sesay
Salia Bility	Masianbu Dulleh	Jargbeh B. Kanneh

Tenebu community

Memorial committee	Healing Ceremony committee	Peace building committee
Tarnue K. Kortee,	Kolubah T. Telgo Sr.	T. Solopogie Zowah
Mulbah Zumo Yougi	Damowa Sabah	Alexander Galakpai
Kebbeh Saylee	Sayworlah B.K. Sumo	Sam Ziama
Zazay Johnson	Korpo Gargo	Krubo Johnson
Mulbah Massawala	Tarnue Marvee	Tarnue S. Wologo
Kebbeh Forkpa	Weedor Boima	Kebbeh korlu
Tarnue Zazay	G. Emmanuel D. Kollie	Krubo Sonnie
Vargular Kortee	Vargula Kollie	Kormassa Bodor
Junior M. Forkpa	Francis Johnson	Kebbeh Akoi
Tarnue Koryan	Zubah Jallah	Mornigo Kortee

Kambolahun community

Memorial committee	Healing Ceremony committee	Peace Building committee
Joseph K. mallay	Ndorbor Koila	Anthony s. Kortu
Hena Korgbena	Kortu Kormehen	Augustine K. Ndorbor
William M. Gboyo	Moiba Kolee	Sengbeh Kawala

Jenneh Moiba	Korpo Sheriff	Alfred Siata
Bendu Korheneh	Kpana Jallah	Sangay Kamara
Moses Blama	Kpana Hena	Francis Samor
Moses Kollie	Kawala Gboveh	James Z. Kollie
Jarwolley Hena	Thomas Korheneh	Anthony H. Hailay
Mamai Bessama	Sowonie Kolee	Elijah Morlue
Jerry Kollie	Boakai Norlay	Nyama Sheriff

Foya community

Memorial committee	Healing Ceremony committee	Peace Building committee
Tamba D. Flomo	Mary Demine	Kumba Saah
Hawa Tamba	Richard Borbor	Benson Fokor
Erickson Kpaika	Erickson S. Kpaikpai	Satta Kpakai
Tamba korsor	Sia Dukor	Gibson Saah
Moses Boakai	Watta Tulay	Prince F. Boakai
Nyuma Bundor	Kumba Jimmy	Tennessee T. Nimour
Saah Dukor	Mohammed Keita	Helso saah
Prince F. Bokai	Momoh Taylor #2	Tenneh Kpakai
Nancy David	Sia Solu	Rebecca Korfeh
Helson Saah	Solomon Johnson	Nancy David

LAPS would also like to acknowledge the effort done by all the Incident Story Takers (IST's) to achieve the trust of the communities and listen to stories of massacres and atrocities. Without this sensitive cooperation it would not have been possible to document the history of war and violence in Liberia and heal the wounds that caused so many tears.

Name	Position
Abu K. Kanneh	Project supervisor
Mawata A. Dulleh	Incident Story Taker
Mohammed Sannoh	Incident Story Taker
Korpo Morlu	Incident Story Taker
J. Timothy Nah	Incident Story Taker
Cecelia S. Hallie	Incident Story Taker
Rovena Tambah	Incident Story Taker
Mawata Dukuly	Incident Story Taker
Offranco B. Sele	Incident Story Taker
B. Augustine Sangalie Sr.	Incident Story Taker
John Y. Woniyouwu	Incident Story Taker
Patience K. Jallah	Incident Story Taker
Nyama B. Kromah	Incident Story Taker
Loupu F. Gayflor	Program Manager

Last but not least LAPS would like to thank our partner in Denmark, DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture for funding the community-healing project and Christel Nellemann for assistance in the production of the book.

1 Liberia Association of 2 Psychosocial Services

3 Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services (LAPS) is a legally
4 registered, non-governmental, member organization established
5 in August 2007. As a professional psychosocial association, it is
6 dedicated to prevent torture and bring relief to survivors of torture,
7 trauma and organized violence in Liberia. LAPS is equally
8 dedicated to prevent torture and bring healing to communities
9 seriously affected by war and violence and thereby enable them
10 to effectively function in their contexts.

11 LAPS originally grew from the international work of the U.S.
12 based Centre for Victims of Torture, whose West-African program
13 expanded to Liberia in 2005. LAPS members received over six
14 years of training and experience with CVT through their work in
15 refugee camps in Guinea and Sierra Leone on rehabilitation and
16 psychosocial therapy for victims of torture, war trauma and
17 gender-based violence.

18 Since its founding as an independent organization in 2007, LAPS
19 has been providing services to victims of torture in Liberia with an
20 emphasis on community-based rehabilitation and culturally,
21 contextualized mental health care to survivors of torture and
22 organized violence, many of them returned refugees, like most
23 LAPS' members themselves.

24 Between Sept. 2011 and Dec. 2012 LAPS documented sites of
25 some of the mass killings committed during the war and
26 implemented a community healing pilot project in four districts of
27 Lofa County with funding from DIGNITY – Danish Institute
28 Against Torture.

29

30

1 Why community healing?

2
3 During the Liberian civil war many communities suffered from
4 mass killings. These traumatized communities are linked to, but
5 go beyond, the massive individual mental suffering of victims that
6 were affected by torture, war traumas and violence. Likewise the
7 explosion of ethnic hatred and violence during the war brought
8 long lasting scars and mistrust into the communities. These
9 divisions have to be overcome for the community to function and
0 live in peaceful coexistence.

1 The first 10 years following the election of Africa's first female
2 president of Liberia was the crucial years. Peace was fragile in
3 Lofa county as a result of ethnic tensions and so, the prevention
4 of violence became a priority in the communities of Lofa County.
5 At the sites of massacres and where atrocities occurred,
6 inhabitants were still grieving their losses and continued to point
7 accusing fingers at other groups which they think were
8 responsible for their losses and many people found it difficult to
9 trust one another, cope with the past and live and work for a
0 future. The inability of the survivors and the victims to bury the
1 dead and the visible remains of the loved ones, constantly
2 reminded the villagers of the atrocities, the fear and the hate of
3 the perpetrators that stands in the way of coming to terms with
4 the past and also prevented the villagers to work for the future;
5 work the fields, maintains houses, tidy the villages etc. As they
6 say; the spirits needs to be put at rest, and it is the responsibility
7 of the family and/or neighbors to do this. LAPS became aware of
8 a local belief that states that, the dead must be given a proper
9 burial ritual for the living to be able to establish a positive
0 relationship with them. During the war many victims were not
1 buried. If the spirits are not put at rest, it is believed, the spirits
2 are unsettled and unhappy and they potentially will haunt the
3 villagers and even cause problems such as sickness or small
4 yield of their common crops". Moreover, the view is not, for the
5 bones to be exhumed from the ground and buried in a graveyard
6 but, that the spirits are honoured and respected and put at rest
7 through local ceremonies and religious customs. Symbolic

1 cleansing of the sites of massacres is seen as necessary before
2 the villagers can resume a normal life. It is based on the belief
3 that ancestors, spirits and gods live in another world and can
4 affect the lives of the living. The ancestors are both appeased in
5 case they are offended, and petitioned to support as well as
6 protect their descendants. Therefore a big part of the community
7 healing process consisted of preparing and performing the burial
8 ceremonies.



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20 *Photo: Traditional rituals at the reburial ceremony in Kambolahun.*

21 22 **LAPS' method and collaborative activities with the** 23 **project communities**

24
25 Just as the massacres committed in the communities were
26 experienced collectively by the community members, it was found
27 expedient for the healing processes to be addressed at collective
28 levels. LAPS offered the community healing services through
29 approaches that are linked to reconciliation, peace building,
30 social cohesion and trust. In so doing, LAPS worked closely with
31 each community to reveal their needs and ideas on what has to
32 be done to heal the wounds of their respective communities. This

1 made the professional support of the project's services to be
2 culturally, contextually and locally rooted in the various
3 communities in which the implementation activities were carried
4 out.

5 LAPS began by selecting the intervention communities based on
6 the stories of the war-time suffering and on the present day
7 tensional level of conflicts, mistrust and divisions among and,
8 within the communities. In order to build trust between LAPS and
9 the project communities a process called "Community entry" was
10 initiated as the first step. During the community entry period,
11 LAPS introduced the project and the expected respective roles of
12 the communities and LAPS. In addition, a "Community
13 awareness campaign" was facilitated in each project community
14 during which time, clarifications were made on what LAPS can
15 and cannot do and participants were allowed to make comments
16 and/or ask questions. Through this process, LAPS gradually built
17 rapport with the communities. As the initial trust was built, it was
18 continuously nurtured by LAPS' staff throughout the project
19 period by carefully observing ethical behavior and being sensitive
20 to the relationships among and within community members as
21 well as, the staff's own commitments to the job and lives as role
22 models in the communities.

23 During the "Community awareness campaign" community
24 members identified at least 8 persons who had witnessed the
25 massacre and other mass killings in the various project
26 communities. These people were interviewed by the IST's
27 (Incident Story Takers from LAPS). The IST's made appointment
28 with the said selected persons for interviews. During the
29 interview, three IST's (inter-viewers) were present: one facilitator
30 and two co-facilitators. The facilitator conducted the interview and
31 the co-facilitators did the audio recording, photo taking and/or
32 interacted directly with the interviewee or helped to do
33 interpretation – as the need arised.

34 The interviewee had a choice to stop the interview at any time
35 when s/he pleased to do so. The interview was conducted in a
36 noise free environment and lasted for 1-1.5 hours. The interviews
37 were conducted in the local dialects (Gbandi in Kambolahun,

- 1 Kissi in Foya, Lorma in Voinjama and Mandingo in Quardu Gboni
- 2 districts). The IST's translated the local dialect into English. All of
- 3 the ISTs hailed from and, can speak the local dialect and
- 4 languages of their respective assigned project areas.
- 5 LAPS used a questionnaire form during the documentation
- 6 processes. The ISTs translated the stories given in the local
- 7 dialect into English on the form. Voice recorders were also used
- 8 during the interviews. The recorder was replayed at LAPS' offices
- 9 in order to compare and rectify any error(s) between the
- 10 information provided by the interviewees and how it was captured
- 11 in English on the summary form by the ISTs.
- 12 In this way information from the survivors of each mass killing
- 13 were accurately gathered and documented by LAPS staff. The
- 14 documentation included: audio recording, photos of interviewees,
- 15 photos of killing sites and mass graves and GPS readings of
- 16 selected sites. The hard copies of information were transformed
- 17 into electronic copies. These electronic copies are systematically
- 18 arranged and used for reporting, for data analysis, book
- 19 production and confidential filing.
- 20 The team of three ISTs per district in consultation with the project
- 21 supervisor developed the 8 testimonies/ interviews into one
- 22 representative story taking into consideration, their similarities
- 23 and differences. In other words, the main story of each project
- 24 community was compiled from several narrators, who described
- 25 the same events in the ways and means in which they either
- 26 experienced, witnessed or were told about it. This thorough
- 27 process aim at obtaining qualified and reliable information –
- 28 since, one person might not remember everything about an
- 29 incident, in which more people were involved and, affecting the
- 30 entire community.
- 31 As the title "Community Healing Project" implies the entire project
- 32 processes were done in collaboration with the community
- 33 members and approved by the local authority. The project was
- 34 never going to be successful without the cooperation and
- 35 involvement of community members and leaders.
- 36

Map of Liberia

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The war in Liberia

Liberia, a small country on the West African coast with about 3.5-4 million inhabitants, suffered from a long, brutal civil war in the years from 1989 to 2003. The conflict took the lives of more than 250,000 innocent civilians and led approximately 1 million people to flee the country. The devastations, killings and massacres were vast and reached all over the country. No region was spared and every Liberian feels the loss and the pain still haunting their souls and communities today.

The history of Liberia

In 1822 The United States established a settlement in Liberia as a colony for freed slaves. Around 12,000 former slaves and African-American were sent to Liberia in the years between 1822 and 1867. Liberia became the first African republic in 1847. The minority known as Americo-Liberians became the national elite dividing the country in native tribes already inhabiting Liberia and the new-comers. The Americo-Liberians ruled the country from 1877 to 1980. In 1980 after food price riots Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe supported by the United States stages a coup where President William R. Tolbert is killed. Samuel Doe led a military junta in the years to come and in 1985 Samuel K. Doe is elected president as the new civilian leader of People's Redemption Council (PRC). It is said that the election was rigged. Samuel Doe led the country supported by his ethnic tribe Krahn replacing the old elite with a new. If people stood up against him he not only revenged on the person but on the tribe of that person, which cut off whole parts of Liberia from subsidies for education and other public services as well as it created a spiral of violence. In November 12, 1985 Thomas Quiwonkpa's failed coup led government troops to Nimba County where many prominent citizens were killed. A period of killings and terror had begun and the country became more and more divided.

Meanwhile, Charles Taylor, the director of the public company General Service Agency was accused of corruption and was captured and imprisoned in the United States. The relation between Samuel K. Doe and the United States was not too good and as it intensified someone saw the opportunity to support Charles Taylor as the man who could take down Samuel Doe and restore peace in Liberia. Under unknown circumstances Charles Taylor returned to Liberia in the late 80s. He entered from the Ivory Coast with the money and arms to take down Samuel Doe. He gathered his army, The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), as he traveled through Nimba County seeking for support. It was not difficult since the same area had been severely hid by Samuel Doe's terrorizing military methods. The deal was to take over power and by a free and fair election choose a new president. Somewhere along the way Charles Taylor and The United States lost confidence in each other and Charles Taylor began seeing himself as president of Liberia.

In 1990 Charles Taylor and his NPFL forces succeeded to overthrow Samuel Doe and the president is killed in the coup. However, fighting did not cease but intensified as the rebels battled each other and the many civilians in between, claiming the lives of more than 250,000 Liberians and displacing a million others into refugee camps in neighboring countries. The former supporters of Samuel K. Doe formed a rebel faction called ULIMO. At a point it divided into two groups ULIMO J supported by Krahn people and headed by Commander Roosevelt Johnson and ULIMO K supported by Mandingo people and headed by Commander Alhajid G.V. Kromah. Another smaller rebel faction called Lofa Defense Force (LDF) was founded in Lofa and, was dominated by the Lorma ethnic group. Most of these rebel factions consisted of one dominating tribal group, but all of them in fact had members from many different tribes.

The second Liberian civil war

In 1995 a peace agreement was signed and Charles Taylor was elected as president. The peace was brief. In 1999 anti-government fighting broke out in the northwest triggering the second Liberian civil war and put Lofa County in the midst of the battle fields. LURD was formed by the former members of the ULIMO forces now headed by Sekou Damanteh Konneh and supported by the United States to take up arms against Charles Taylor's government. Lofa County was especially targeted by LURD and suffered massive damages and atrocities during this period. Neighboring Guinea was accused by Charles Taylor of supporting the rebellion, and Ghana, Nigeria and others accused Taylor of financially backing the rebels in Sierra Leone. A second rebel group launched an attack on Taylor's regime from the southeast putting Monrovia in the midst of the fighting and leading to the final defeat of Charles Taylor.

In 2003 Charles Taylor stepped down, fled the country and went into exile in Nigeria. UN and ECOWAS entered as a breakthrough in the peace negotiations was secured. A transitional government steered the country towards elections in 2005. In 2006 Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a former minister of the Americo-Liberian government and with a record of service as an international technocrat at the World Bank, became president backed by the United States and the international society, marking a new democratic beginning for the country. The election was seen as the first relatively free and fair election in Liberia's recent history. The Johnson-Sirleaf administration has received a significant level of support from its international partners across a wide range of sectors. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was one of three women that shared the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize just three days before the first round of elections for president began in Liberia in October 2011. She was re-elected as President in November 2011.

The election was relatively peaceful despite that her main rival, Winston Tubman pulled out of the second round of the presidential race, saying the vote had been rigged. The allegations led to the resignation of election body's director, James Fromayan, before the second round. Consequently, the poll was marked by a low turnout due to the boycott. After the election Tubman said he would not cooperate with Ms Johnson-Sirleaf's government, raising the prospect that her initiatives could be slowed in parliament where her Unity Party failed to win a majority. Nonetheless, the situation in the country appears to be relatively calm and peaceful after Tubman accepted the defeat. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president for second term in 2011. Charles Taylor was convicted for war crimes committed in Sierra Leone, his actions and responsibilities in Liberia was not included in the charges against him, in the Hague and got 50 years of imprisonment to be served in the UK.

The ethnic divisions in Lofa County

Lofa is a county in the northernmost part of Liberia. It is one of 15 counties that comprise the first-level of administrative division in the nation, it has seven political districts. They are Salayea, Zorzor, Voinjama, Quardu Gbondi, Kolahun, Vahun, Foya Statutory District, and Zogolomai Township. The largest city and county capital is Voinjama. Foya is the second largest city . Lofa County has about six ethnic groups: Mende, Kissi, Gbandi, Mandingo, Kpelleh, and Lorma. In Lofa people practice Islam, Christianity and other traditional forms of religion. Poro Society are for the boys and Sande are for the girls and both still serve as cultural schools to promote ethics, mutual respect, tolerance and cultural values. Lofa County is known for its high contribution to agricultural development, academic excellence and a high number of university graduates. Additionally, the county is famous for its self-help community initiative sprit.



Photo: Voinjama city seen from the Voinjama viewpoint.

Based on the 2008 Population Census, Lofa has 276,114 people, making the county the fifth largest populated county in Liberia. Many people left the area as refugees in 1999 and the early 2000's as it became a main focus of fighting during the Liberian civil war. During the course of the Liberian civil war, the many ethnic and religious groups that lived side by side, were enacted as antagonistic identity categories to divide the population into oppositional groups, aligned by the fear of the others. Many brutal and mass killings were carried out in Lofa County along these ethnic and religious lines, between the Lormas and Mandingoes as well as between the Kissis and Gbandis. This has created a situation of fortified identity categories and fear, suspicion and distrust between entire groups of people after the war.

Relationships between the Lorma and Mandingo people before the Liberian civil war

The Lorma ethnic group is located in Voinjama and Zorzor districts of Lofa County while the Mandingo people are in Quadu Gboni district. Both ethnic groups have had a history of cordiality existing between them before the Liberian civil war.

Intermarriages between the Lorma women and Mandingo men was one of the factor that paved way for the cordiality that existed between the two ethnic groups prior to the war in Liberia.

During those "good old days" the Lorma women took their relationship with the Mandingo men very precious and, used to refer to it as 'Na Mor Di Gee' an expression in the Lorma tribe meaning 'my Muslim man'. Children that were born out of the wedlock of these intermarriages are today referred to as "Koniaca Mandingo people" and or, "Bonde Lorma people".

Over time, the Mandingo people started expressing dissatisfaction over the constant manner in which the Lorma people made them to run and hide behind closed doors as a means of showing respect to the activities of the Lorma people secret societies in which, they (the Mandingo people) were not part of. The Mandingo people complained that their rights were being violated because, the Lorma people's traditional masks were worn in town at any time without warning or prior notice. And, if you are caught seeing the masks, you will be heavily fined, punished, or made to join the secret society by force.

On the other hand, the Lorma people started expressing dissatisfaction over the one sided manner of the intermarriage practices between them and the Mandingo people. They complained that only Lorma women were given in marriage to Mandingo men while, Mandingo women refrained from marrying Lorma men. Besides, the Lorma people complained that the Mandingo people are discriminatory when it comes to their religion. They behaved and made the Lorma people to feel that anybody who is not a Muslim, is a "Kaffir" and should not be trusted.

1 **During the war**

2 When Thomas Quiwonkpa (a Gio) led a failed coup in 1985,
3 President Samuel K. Doe's armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) made
4 arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and killings of Gio and Mano ethnic
5 groups in Northern Nimba County. After the abortive coup,
6 prominent Mandingos went on television to pledge support for
7 president Doe. This caused many groups who hated Doe to
8 intensely mistrust the Mandingos.

9 When Charles Taylor launched the rebel incursion in 1989
10 through Nimba county, the Gios and Manos joined the National
11 Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and targeted and killed the
12 Mandingos.

13 The Mandingos fled into exile and joined warring factions – one of
14 which was called ULIMO and later another one called LURD.
15 They returned to Liberia with strong vengeance. They entered
16 Lofa, targeted the Lorma communities, violated and looted their
17 traditional shrines. Moreover, they haunted and killed the Lorma
18 people which later led to the formation of the Lofa Defense Force
19 predominantly by the Lorma people to prevent themselves from
20 further attacks from the Mandingo people.

21

22 **Relationships between the Gbandi and Kissi people before**
23 **the Liberian civil war**

24 Until the late 1970 Foya and Vahun Districts were part of Kolahun
25 District. Foya was later declared "Foya District" or the Kissi
26 Chiefdom and Vahun District became Guma Mande Chiefdom
27 leaving Kolahun as an independent district known as the Gbandi
28 Chiefdom.

29 After the two districts were separated politically, relationships
30 between the Gbandis and Kissis were still cordial. In fact, the
31 district Headquarters of Kolahun called Kolba City was named
32 and styled after the late paramount chiefs, Thomas Kollie of the
33 Gbandi Chiefdom and Chief Tamba Taylor of the Kissi chiefdom.

34

1 **During the war**

2 The Liberian United for Reconstruction and development (LURD)
3 was the largest rebel group that crossed from neighboring Guinea
4 and entered Liberia through Lofa County between 2001-2002.
5 LURD was made up of so many ethnic groups of Liberia but, was
6 mainly dominated by the Mandingo, Gbandi, and Krahn ethnic
7 groups.

8 In Lofa County, the AFL group that remained loyal to Charles
9 Taylor's government up to the "last Days" was the one dominated
0 by the Kissi ethnic group in Foya district, who have a common
1 border with the Gbandis in Kolahun district.

2 Because of this make up, on several occasions, heavy brutality
3 and horrible human rights abuses were suffered by most
4 members of each of these ethnic groups from the hands of the
5 other. This resulted in most of the members of these two groups
6 to flee the country in large numbers into Sierra Leone and other
7 neighboring countries. In fact, the largest group of Liberian
8 refugees that were relocated into the eight refugee camps of
9 Sierra Leone by UNHCR were the Gbandis and Kissis.

0

1 **After the war**

2 The communities are not healed from the war time experiences.
3 After the war, in almost all of the communities of Lofa, continued
4 tensions between ethnic groups, which still perceive each other
5 as enemies, can be felt and in some districts, people are still
6 living according to a hostile and distrustful mind-set established in
7 the war time.

Stories from the war

The stories of massacres and mass killings from four communities in Lofa County are based on the memories of survivors and other interviewees with knowledge about the incidents. The testimonies have been summarized into one story for each community by LAPS. This story is thought to carry common relevance to all community members. Besides the stories written in this book, LAPS have gathered other personal stories about loss and grief. These are not forgotten but purposely kept out of the book as to emphasize the common story of the community. Each community's history of violence will be described in the following pages.

Tenebu

Interview Date: December 2011

Community/Clan/District/County:
Tenebu town/Bondi/Voinjama/Lofa

Name of Interviewees: Korpo Tennie, Kebbeh F. Mulbah, Korpo Kollie and Jessay Warnley, Sonnre Kollre

Tenebu town is located on the Voinjama-Monrovia high way. Majority of the inhabitants of Tenebu town are farmers. The rest of the populations are tradesmen, teachers and civil servants. The community lived in peace with its neighbors prior to the outbreak of the Liberian civil war.

On one Monday morning (February 20, 1995), the Tenebu community experienced brutal mass killings of at least 200 persons. The victims included some of its inhabitants but, were largely, citizens from the surrounding communities who have come in previous days to participate in an important traditional ceremony.

Family members and inhabitants from nearby towns including Dazabah, Lormai, Gbebeta/Suomai, Labolozu and others had gathered in Tenebu to perform the ritual ceremony (commonly called red dirt-wake) for one of the elderly Zoe women (Vaigolar Tukpo). Early in the morning at about 5:00 am, while almost everybody was still asleep, the rebels silently entered the town. They went from house to house and ruthlessly butchered people with knives, axes, bow and arrows and other silent weapons. The killers accomplished this by visiting each house, knocking on doors and requesting dwellers to come out. In other instances, they called the exact names of some of the inhabitants of the houses, who then, came out thinking that it was a familiar community member. As soon as each door was opened, the killers attacked and killed the victims instantly. By the time the community members discovered that they were under attack by unknown killers, the attackers, who were many, had spread throughout the nock and corners of Tenebu town. This made it difficult for people to escape and survive.

Between 7:00-8:00 am, the attackers who called themselves "Grasshoppers" showed themselves and captured the rest of the community members who were alive. The attackers gathered the rest of the town's inhabitants and accused them of supporting their enemy – the ULIMO rebel faction, who they said was using Tenebu as their base. For this and other reasons, they killed almost all of the captives with the use of knives and other silent weapons. Some were slaughtered, hit or had their skull burst with axes, some were deeply cut in different parts of the body and few were shot as they tried to escape. Some of the captives pretended to be dead after being beaten or stabbed. Others were unconscious due to excessive bleeding and were thought to be dead. Most of the people who escaped through the bushes died due to excessive bleeding from gun wounds.

On the way to Tenebu the same attackers also killed many people at other locations in the nearby towns and villages. For instance, in Dazaba town, about 6 persons all male were killed including the town's traditional chiefs who were burned alive by

1 At this time, people were running in different directions. Most
2 people especially those who had recently come to Barkedu for
3 rescue were confused and did not know where to run. Many
4 people were captured and tortured and girls and women were
5 raped by the fighters. There were shootings and killings all over
6 the community. Rebels, who were looting, killed many people in
7 their homes. Some people drowned in the near-by river (Lofa
8 River) while trying to escape. The number of people killed in their
9 homes and in the river is unknown. Bodies of slaughtered people
10 were lying on the ground outside some homes.

11 More than 400 people were gathered at the town square not
12 knowing that killings had already begun at other places in town.
13 All the captives were treated roughly and were asked to sit on the
14 ground outside. The rebels' commander said: "You are all dead
15 bodies now." With this statement, the captives lost all hope and
16 felt that it was the end of their lives. The commander asked the
17 town chief for money. The town chief, Mr. Ansumana Balloh
18 (known as Duwana Balloh), and some elders including the town's
19 treasure, Abu L. Balloh, left the group accompanied by gun men
20 to get the money.

21 Before they returned with the money, it started to rain. The rebels'
22 commander asked the captives to enter the town hall. Some
23 managed to escape while entering the town hall. Everyone sat on
24 the floor facing the rebels. While in the hall, the commander
25 asked two elders, Sekou Jabateh and Varlee Kanneh, to make an
26 announcement so that everybody would come to the meeting.
27 Sekou Jabateh left the hall and started making announcement for
28 people to come to the meeting. Some people came and joined
29 the captives in the hall. When Sekou Jabateh was out of sight he
30 advised people not to go to the hall. He told them to run for their
31 lives instead. He himself ran into the bush and escaped. That is
32 how Sekou Jabateh survived the incident. The other announcer
33 Varlee Kanneh, returned to the town hall after making the
34 announcement.

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36



Photo: The town hall in Barkedu today (2013) and members of the peacebuilding committee together with LAPS and DIGNITY staff.

6 Town chief Ansumana Balloh along with others came with the
7 money (LD\$ 3,000) that was requested by the commander. The
8 women were asked too and they brought LD\$ 2,000. The town
9 chief presented the sum of LD\$5,000 plus a cow to the rebels'
10 commander and said: "We welcome you all to our town. We are
11 civilians and peaceful people. This is why we are presenting to
12 you this sum of money with one cow as welcoming treat. So feel
13 at home, we are one people". The commander received the
14 money and said: "Today is your last day on earth. You, the
15 Mandingos, are our enemies and we are going to kill all of you
16 today and now."

17 At this moment, it was clearly indicated that the captives would all
18 be killed, so there was no reason to beg for mercy. They started
19 praying and reciting versions of the holy Quran. The commander
20 asked the children and women to leave the town hall. All the
21 children including most women left the hall immediately. The

1 After few years, most family members whose relatives were
2 involved in the massacre in Barkedu decided to return home to at
3 least bury the remains of the dead. In 1997, when the war
4 ceased, most of the community members returned to Liberia from
5 Guinea. At this time, the remains of the massacred victims
6 including their bones were collected and buried into one mass
7 grave that is located in front of the central mosque in Barkedu,
8 where LAPS' memorial structure is erected today.

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10 **GPS readings:**

11 **Killing site: ELEV 1677ft, N 08°17.631', W 009°37.998'**

12 **Mass grave: ELEV 1683ft, N 08° 17. 595', W 009° 38. 012'**

1 **Kambolahun**

2
3 **Interview Date:** December 2011

4 **Community/Clan/District/County:**
5 Kambolahun/Tamhaba/Kolahun/Lofa

6 **Name of Interviewees:** August K. Ndorbor, Norlay Boakai, Kortu
7 Komehen Mary James and Moniba Korlee

8
9 On August 18, 2001 a tragedy occurred in Kambolahun town
0 when people fell in an ambush set up by the Armed Forces of
1 Liberia (AFL), commonly called "Government troops". The
2 gunmen killed about 46 people in cold blood during this incident.
3 According to the interviewees, the only known survivor of the
4 massacre was the one who narrated this story to them.

5 When the Liberians United for Reconstruction and Development
6 (LURD) rebel faction captured and based its fighting forces in
7 Kolahun city, they collected and encouraged citizens from the
8 nearby towns and villages to live together with them in Kolahun.
9 At one point in time, food became scarce and the entire
0 population began to starve. The only means of getting food by
1 then was to hide from the LURD rebels and go to the nearby
2 towns, villages and or, bushes in search of food.

3 And so, one day a group of people from the Wulukoha clan went
4 to their towns and villages in search of food stuff. While in the
5 bushes for about two days, they were able to gather enough rice,
6 and other local foods. On their way back to Kolahun on the third
7 day, Monday August 18, 2001 the group decided to pass through
8 Kambolahun town--which was by then completely deserted.

9 It was here that the group fell into an ambush belonging to the
0 Government troops of Charles Taylor. Everyone were captured
1 and taken to the commander. The commander accused the
2 captives of supporting LURD forces. He threatened to kill them
3 all.

1 Among the group was one of the commander's biological sisters.
2 She pleaded with her brother to spare their lives. She offered him
3 \$700LD but it only made him angry and he promised to kill his
4 sister first so that the rest would know that he was not joking. He
5 then shot dead his sister in front of the group. Everyone lost
6 hope.

7 The commander ordered his men to tie everyone up. Later, one
8 of the captives was given to a soldier to be escorted in a distance
9 and executed. Fortunately, the soldier knew him from the past
10 and so, freed him and let him go. He shot his gun in the air to
11 convince the commander that the order was executed. That is
12 how the witness survived the incident. The rest of the captives,
13 who were still under the custody of the gunmen were crying and
14 pleading to be released, but to no avail. The entire group which
15 was, made up of women, boys, girls and a few men, were all
16 killed in less than 10 minutes. Their bodies were left scattered on
17 the ground.

18 When the news reached the people hiding in the bushes and the
19 surrounding villages, people feared further incidents and did not
20 dare to leave their shelters. However, some people came to see
21 what had happened. The awful sight of dead bodies all over the
22 ground made them run back into the bushes in different directions
23 due to fear and shock. "What a massacre, we are finished", they
24 said as they ran into the bushes.

25 The next day Tuesday, August 19, 2001 in the morning hours,
26 people from the bushes sneaked out carefully to find out what
27 had really happened and who were killed. The group walked
28 quietly into Kambolahun town fearing to meet the same rebels.

29 Upon their arrival, they saw family members' dead bodies lying
30 on the main road linking Voinjama to Kolahun. At the same
31 moment, another group of people were coming from Kolahun to
32 also see what had happened. Among them was Augustine K.
33 Ndordor, a citizen and a classroom teacher of the Kambolahun
34 town who lost his son in the incident.

35 Upon their arrival to the site there was no time for crying, not
36 because they did not care for or love those killed, but because

1 they were afraid and had only limited time to stay there. They
2 noticed that with the exception of one, all victims came from
3 different places in Wulukoha clan, Kolahun district and not from
4 Kambolahun. Total people killed were calculated to be around 46.
5



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8 *Photo: Community members showing where the five men were buried.*

9
0 The town chief of Kambolahun (Mr. Kortu Kormeheh) encouraged
1 those community members who were at their senses to bury the
2 bodies. The first group of people (39 people including 2 pregnant
3 women) were buried in two different mass graves near the main
4 road in Kambolahun town. Two persons were buried separately
5 under a mango tree near the town hall and five were buried at
6 Fassavolu junction, outside the Kambolahun towards the
7 direction of Kolahun town. The bodies were buried quickly fearing
8 that the soldiers would be back.

9 Besides this incident, similar massacres also took place in
0 Bondolahun town, in the same district, in August 1993. According
1 to the four interviewees, ULIMO troops entered Bondolahun town
2 and captured and killed 28 community dwellers all men. About
3 five persons, who were forced to carry looted materials, arms and

1 ammunitions, were brought to Kambolahun and slaughtered.
2 After the five persons were killed, the rebels opened their
3 stomachs and took away their hearts and ate them. Those dead
4 bodies were again buried by people of Kambolahun in a valley
5 near the main road leading to Kolahun. The exact number of
6 persons killed and buried in Kambolahun is not known.
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21 *Photo: Memorial construction and committee members together with*
22 *LAPS staff in Kambolahun (2013).*
23

24 **GPS readings:**

25 **Memorial site: ELEV 1778ft, N 08° 20.629', W 10° 03.585'**

26 **Five men grave: ELEV 1753ft, N 08° 20.646', W 10° 03.350'**

27 **Junction grave: ELEV 1773FT N 08° 20.647'WO 10° 03.372'**

1 Foya

2 **Interview Date:** December 2011

3 **Community/District/County:**

4 Foya city/ Foya Statutory District/Lofa

5 **Name of Interviewees:** Moses Boakai, Prince Borkai and Mary
6 Deminee

7
8 In the years of the civil war from 1989 to 2003 a lot of warring
9 factions battled to have Foya community as their base. The
0 National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invaded Foya in August
1 1990. Samuel Doe's government officials, security personnel and
2 members of the Armed forces of Liberia (AFL) were to be killed
3 and fled to neighboring Guinea and Sierra Leone for rescue. The
4 guns were silent and Foya was temporarily quiet. Many civilians
5 went back feeling that the war was over. A lot of people believed
6 that since the rebels had captured the city and there were no
7 government soldiers left to fight, there would be peace in the
8 community.

9 However, the NPFL rebels remained in Foya up to 1993 and they
0 began to harass, beat and loot from civilians. The soldiers were
1 armed and took advantage of their power to intimidate people.
2 During this period the community was marked by terrifying events
3 as unexpected disappearances of family members, killings,
4 forced labor, rape and beatings among others. Many people lost
5 their lives and properties. People were forced to stay in the city
6 as the killing of civilians intensified.

7 Early in July 1993 another fighting group, United Liberation
8 Movement (ULIMO), passed through Kolahun Town and entered
9 Foya from Kpombu road. This group attacked Foya with heavy
0 shooting, which frightened all of the community. It had been a
1 long time since they had experienced shootings. The opposing
2 fighting group, NPFL, responded with equal forces by using
3 heavy weapons. After a long bitter fight ULIMO got control of
4 Foya. Lots of people lost their lives in the exchange of gunfires.
5 Some NPFL soldiers along with civilians were captured and

1 killed. People were killed in various forms: besides shooting,
2 some were put into a drum of boiled water while on fire, some
3 were burned alive, a lot of people were slaughtered, some were
4 put into wells alive and others were cut into pieces. These pieces
5 of human bodies were carried into the community in
6 wheelbarrows from house to house for sale. People were forced
7 to buy a piece of human flesh or else they could be killed too.
8 Everybody that the ULIMO rebels met in the community bought
9 the human meat.



24 *Photo: Mr. Boakai showing the killing site at the airfield in Foya.*

25 In August 1993 on one occasion, the ULIMO commander passed
26 an order to summon the paramount chief immediately or else he
27 promised to kill 400 men and 300 women. Everybody was
28 worried. More than 150 community dwellers were gathered on the
29 airfield and threatened to be killed if the paramount chief did not
30 show up. The men were separated from women and positioned
31 into two rows regardless of age, vulnerability or other conditions.

1 Most of these innocent civilians were killed except from a few
2 who survived. However, the killing didn't stop. Other community
3 members, who refused to go to the airfield, were searched out by
4 gunmen and killed in their homes.

5 The town was quiet and polluted with bad odors from decayed
6 human beings. The commander asked community members to
7 clean the entire Foya community and the airfield. The airfield was
8 the biggest killing site. You could smell the dead bodies from far
9 away. Community members had to watch loved ones decaying
0 without having the chance to bury them properly. On September
1 1993 people in the community gathered for clean-up campaign.
2 They dug several pits for burial, but the biggest pit was on the
3 airfield where over 150 people were buried. The bodies were
4 already decomposed. The only way they could move them was to
5 tie ropes around their bodies and drag them into the pit. On this
6 cleaning day many civilians managed to flee to neighboring
7 Guinea and Sierra Leone.

8 The remaining population was used as forced labor. 3 or 5 gallon
9 containers of oil or a 50kg bag of coffee was given to a person to
0 carry for a long distance. 5 persons were asked to push a vehicle
1 to the border for sale or for repair. Another group of people
2 accompanied by gunmen was ordered to go in the bushes to
3 search for food for the rebels.

4
5 There are lots of mass graves all over Foya. The biggest and
6 most recognizable one is where the memorial structure is
7 presently erected for the community adjacent the magisterial
8 court at the old airfield.

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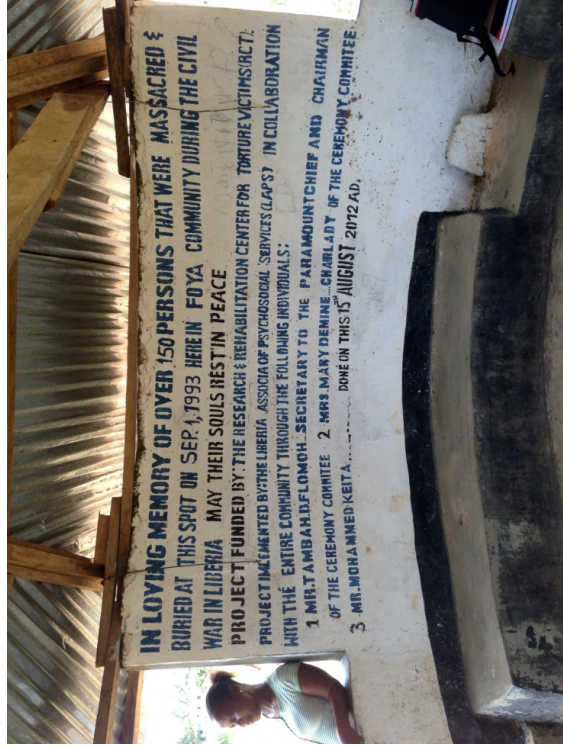


Photo: Memorial construction in Foya honoring the victims of the massacre in 1993.

GPS readings:
Killing site: ELEV 1478 ft, N08° 21'59.1, W010° 12'54.3*
Burial site: ELEV 1461 ft, N08° 21.6631, W010° 12'56.2*
Memorial site: ELEV 1482 ft, N08° 21'66.9, W010° 12.719*

Effects of the war

1 The effects of the war concern all areas of social life. The four
2 communities have all described similar socio-economic effects
3 which will be presented shortly in this section.
4
5 Both men, women, children and the communities suffer from the
6 blood wasted on their lands. Some have never returned to their
7 hometowns because of the atrocities committed and others still
8 live in foreign countries afraid that the war will return.
9
10 Many women and children were left without husbands and fathers
11 to sustain the family during and after the war. Some children have
12 been left without anyone to care for them and therefore walk the
13 streets to find food on their own. The lack of parental support
14 makes children leave their homes and often engage in criminal
15 activities or transactional sex. Along with rape and neglect
16 transactional sex has led to one of the world's highest rate of
17 teenage pregnancies in Liberia. Some children were captured
18 and used as soldiers, some were sexually exploited. A lot of them
19 deal with feelings of shame and low self-esteem and become self
20 destructive after years of abuse or experiences as child soldiers.
1 Many children could not attend school in all these years and
2 some have partly finished educations, which means that a lot of
3 young people are uneducated or overage compared to their
4 educational level.
5
6 Continued tensions between ethnic groups, which still perceive
7 each other as enemies, add urgency to the task. People
8 misunderstand each other and many conflicts over tribal identities
9 still occur. Some towns experience problems related to a border
10 separating two tribes, which can easily escalate to violent
11 conflicts. Land disputes are often seen between members of the
12 same community. People no longer cooperate for a common
13 goal, leaders lack support and the youth do not show the same
14 respect to the elders as they used to do. The lack of cooperation
15 and trust makes it hard for a community to farm their land, earn
16 money and take good care of the community.

The community healing ceremony

LAPS quickly understood and, found that there was a need to honor the victims of the war and give them a proper burial to help minimize some of the effects of the war and rebuild peace. Thus a ceremony was planned in each community to conduct the necessary rituals.

To prepare and perform the ceremony three committees were established; the peace-building-, the memorial- and the healing committee. These committees functioned as the liaison between LAPS and the community throughout the project period.



Photo: In the traditional ceremony bones and ritualized irons are buried in the mass grave under the memorial construction in Kambolahun.

Preparing for the ceremony

The committees' preparations were done in a series of meetings, at least 10 to 12 meetings in two to three months. The towns of that community were invited to an initial meeting. Representatives of each town (about 10 persons) gathered to plan the process. In the first meeting, the overall activities of the ceremony and functions of committees were introduced. This was followed up by creating three committees: the healing ceremony committee, the memorial committee and the peace building committee. The committees consisted of people from different groupings, tribes, religious and cultural backgrounds. In subsequent meetings each town presented at least 5 persons to form part of any of the three committees. Members were selected based on previous experiences of ceremonial activities. Each committee met once per week to discuss and plan.



Photo: Committee members and community leaders in Kambolahun at the ceremony.

Each committees was comprised of 10 members. Heads of the committee (chair person, secretary and treasurer) were appointed by members of that committee. People in the committees were:

- Local leaders: town chief, sectional chief, paramount chief, and elders.
- Religious leaders: Imam, Pastor;
- Cultural and/or traditional leaders: Zoe men, Zoe women, nephews, head of dancers;
- Women leaders: chair lady, head of women association, head of market women;
- Youth leaders: youth chair, sport chair, head of youth advocacy group;
- LAPS staff: Incident Story Taker (IST), and Project supervisor.

The committees were found important because they help to ensure a profound community involvement and their related responsibilities, as well as, help to avoid overlapping of functions. Each committee will accurately list activities for the ceremony that they are responsible for, in line with the different religious and cultural beliefs. The committees also performed the roles of communicating relevant information to the members they represent.

Below are brief descriptions of the various functions that were carried out by each committee.

The Memorial committee:

- Identified mass graves and gave estimates of people buried in the graves.
- Came up with the type of memorial structure needed by the community.
- Listed materials needed for the construction and, organized the type and form of materials that were contributed by each the communities.
- Helped to store and supervise the collection of locally provided items.
- Worked with local leader (city mayor) to select area and placement of the memorial structure.

- Provided masons and carpenters (paid by LAPS) for memorial construction.
- Mobilized helpers (man power) and monitored construction activities.
- Planned and facilitated clean-up campaign of the memorial site.
- Joined other committees in carrying out the ceremony.



Photo: Construction of memorial site in Tenebu.

The Healing Ceremony committee:

- Explained activities involved in the ceremony, the process and meaning attached to each activity to the other committees.
- Identified which community members will perform the different activities.
- Listed materials involved in carrying out the ceremony and which materials the community can provide.
- Invited local government and family members who are at far distances to the ceremony.

- Sensitized people to be careful not to do things that will jeopardize or might not be appropriate to the ceremony.
- Helped to identify individuals and families that are severely affected by the war and refer them for counseling as found appropriate.
- Supervised the entire ceremony process along with LAPS.



Photo: A cow is killed and prepared for the ceremonial feast.

The Peace building committee:

- Before the ceremony:
- They worked with the youth to organize and implement peace and reconciliation tournament.
 - Listed materials needed for the tournament and which materials the community can provide.
 - Helped to deliver messages or invitation letters for the ceremony.

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Photo: Youth tournament in Tenebu.

After the ceremony:

- Participated in capacity building workshop facilitated by LAPS on conflict management and resolution.
- Identified problems affecting the community and explain previous methods used to resolve them.
- Facilitated ongoing peace and reconciliation tournaments involving the youth.
- After training in conflict management the committee facilitated awareness on peace building and conflict management strategies in their respective communities.
- Have been helping to resolve conflicts between individuals, couples, families and others in their respective communities.
- Served as liaison between the community and the local government in case of problems or special needs identified in the community.
- Served as custodian of the sustainability aspect of the project activities within their respective communities.

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Photo: Youth tournament in Barkedu.



Photo: Women in Barkedu preparing food for the ceremony.

Performing the ceremony

The ceremony is performed differently according to each community, their needs, wishes, tribe, religion and culture. For example in Barkedu community about 98% of the inhabitants are Muslims or traditional people. All the ceremony activities were done in line with this. Tenebu is another community, which has about 96% Christians and traditional people. The performance of their ceremony was purely in line with their culture and Christianity. For Kambolahun and Foya communities there are groups of Muslims, Christians and traditional people. When traditional people are mentioned in this book it refers to people who strongly believe in cultural performances. They are Zoes and Herbalists. They do not believe in Christianity or Islamic religion. They perform ceremony in line with the culture of their locality.



Photo: Traditional rituals as part of the ceremony in Kambolahun.

Foya Ceremony as example

The three committees consisting of Christians, Muslims and traditional people worked together to plan the activities for the ceremony and to build the memorial site. They performed the ceremony in three days making space for the special activities for all the religious groups.

1 group while performing a special ritual for all the Zoes that were
2 killed during the war.
3



16 Photo: Indoor program in Foya as part of the ceremony.
17

18 **Day 3, indoor program:**

19 The entire ceremony was climaxed with an indoor program and
20 peace tournaments. The peace tournaments are held to bring the
21 youth together from different towns or clans and honor the young
22 people lost in the war. Play and socializing are not prioritized in
23 the communities today, which is why the peace tournaments also
24 functions as a reintroduction to social sports as it was common
25 before the war. The program consisted of a mix of traditions,
26 dance and song, religious prayers, testimonies from victims or
27 relatives and the possibility for government, non-governmental
28 organizations, family members, youth and other invited guests to
29 make comments, thanks or suggestions on the ceremony and the
30 process. A cow was killed and food was prepared from it, so that
31 everybody could gather and eat the food together.

1 Upon the facilitation of the healing ceremonies in each of the
2 project communities, changes in the direction of collective
3 healings were gradually experienced in the following areas:

4 The project communities expressed signs and optimism –

- 5 - that they feel cleansed from bad spirits and saved from
6 misfortunes.
- 7 - that bad conscience associated to the deceased and the
8 spirits will disappear.
- 9 - that negative perceptions of one another as enemies will
0 be minimized.
- 1 - that peace and mutual understanding among people is
2 being established.
- 3 - that conflicts and violence in the community are being
4 reduced.
- 5 - that the community can move forward towards sustainable
6 peace, trust and social cohesion.
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9 Photo: The team leaders shake hands and the winning team is awarded
0 with a new football after the tournaments in Kambolahun.

Peace building

The communities have come a long way and experienced many improvements but it is of course still a work in progress. People still suffer from traumatization and disputes still occur. It is important that the community is prepared to follow up on these issues and that they have the skills to solve as many conflicts as they can to avoid escalating conflicts of tribal hatred and violence and to ensure the survival of the community.

After the ceremony was carried out, the healing and memorial committees were no longer active and members of the peace building committee were rearranged and increased to 15 persons. This is to continue the peace building process and ensure sustainability of the community healing project. Members are trained in conflict management as part of the peacebuilding process through capacity building workshops with regular supervision by LAPS field staff during the entire life span of the project.



Photo: Peace tournaments in Kambolahun.

Your story

These pages are for you to write your own or your family's personal story. How did you experience the war? What happened in your community? Where are you today and why? Writing these things can be part of your personal healing and it can be an evidence for future generations to know what the war did to you and your family and what your family and community did to overcome it.

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