

Ableegay Keynote Address Brisbane 2026

Theme: *Unity in Action — Building a Strong Liberian Diaspora Organization for Service, Stability, and Opportunity*

Speaker: *Mr Simeon Sebastian Kormon*

Estimated time: 12–15 minutes (plus Q&A)

Opening / Salutations

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

Honourable elders, respected community leaders, youth leaders, faith leaders, partners, and friends—thank you for welcoming me tonight.

To the Executive and members of this organisation: I am deeply honoured to stand before you, not simply as a guest speaker, but as a fellow Liberian and a fellow community-builder who believes in one truth: **when a people organise with purpose, they can transform pain into progress.**

Liberia has known hardship. Our nation endured fourteen years of civil conflict from **1989 to 2003**, and while the guns fell silent, the work of healing—economic renewal, political stability, and social-justice reconciliation—has continued to challenge us. Even in the diaspora, we feel the weight of that history. But tonight is not about despair. Tonight is about **direction**. It is about how we—right here—can become a united front for solutions.

I want to speak to three key points:

1. **Why community-based organisations matter**—especially when the nation struggles with health, education, food security, housing, substance abuse, alcohol, domestic violence, and other urgent social needs.
 2. **How to establish, grow, and protect a strong diaspora organisation**—in the face of migration controversies, policy complexities, and internal organisational pressures.
 3. **How to overcome settlement challenges**—and turn networking into real opportunities for business, careers, and community prosperity.
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Talking Point 1: A United Front for National and Community Challenges

Friends, no government—anywhere—can solve every problem alone. Governments may set policy, but **communities deliver belonging**, and belonging is what sustains people when systems become overwhelmed.

Your organisation exists because you understand something profound:

Unity is not just a slogan—it is an operational strategy.

When we talk about **health**, we are talking about prevention, mental wellbeing, and access.
When we talk about **education**, we are talking about equity, mentoring, and pathways for youth.
When we talk about **food security and housing**, we are talking about dignity and stability.
When we talk about **drug abuse, alcohol, and domestic violence**, we are talking about trauma, accountability, and restoring safety—especially for women and children.

Here is the key: these issues are connected. You cannot solve domestic violence without also addressing trauma. You cannot solve substance abuse without also addressing unemployment and hopelessness. You cannot solve youth crime without also addressing identity, belonging, and opportunity.

So a united front must do three things well:

1) Listen with structure

- Hold community forums with clear outcomes.
- Collect stories and data (even simple surveys).
- Identify the top 3 priorities for the next 12 months.

2) Deliver services through partnerships

- Work with local health providers, schools, councils, police liaison officers, and social services.
- Create referral pathways for families—not shame, but support.

3) Measure and report impact

- Track what you did, who you helped, and what changed.
- Celebrate wins publicly to strengthen trust.

Because trust is the currency of community work.

Talking Point 2: The Importance of Building a Strong Diaspora Organisation in Today's Migration Climate

We are living in a time when migration is debated globally—sometimes with compassion, and sometimes with controversy. In such a climate, a diaspora organisation is not merely a social group. It becomes:

- a **support system**,
- a **voice**,
- a **bridge** between cultures, and
- a **platform for stability and development**.

But for an organisation to succeed, it must move through stages: **establishment, growth, and peak**. And each stage demands maturity.

A) Establishment: Getting the Foundation Right

At the beginning, passion is high—but structure may be low. That is where many groups struggle.

Strong foundations require:

- A clear **mission** and **vision** (simple, memorable, measurable).
- A constitution or bylaws that define:
 - membership rules
 - leadership roles
 - election timelines
 - meeting procedures
 - financial accountability
- A code of conduct and conflict-of-interest policy.

Let me be direct:

An organisation without a constitution is a car without brakes.

It might move fast, but it cannot stop safely.

B) Growth: Managing People, Programs, and Pressure

As you grow, your visibility increases. So do expectations—and criticism.

This is where **policy formulation** becomes crucial:

- What is your stance on internal disputes?
- Who speaks for the organisation publicly?
- How do you protect confidentiality in domestic violence cases?
- How do you ensure youth programs are safe and compliant?
- How do you handle money with integrity?

Growth also reveals tensions—because growth attracts competing interests.

C) Peak: Protecting the Mission Against Division

At the peak, the organisation has influence—and influence attracts politics, personal ambition, and conflict.

So you must master four disciplines:

1) Constitutionality, Resolution, and Regulations

- Make sure decision-making follows the constitution.
- Create a formal grievance and mediation process.
- Have clear disciplinary steps for misconduct.

2) Fundraising and Resource Mobilisation

Fundraising is not begging—it is **offering people a chance to invest in a mission.**

Practical strategies include:

- Membership dues (low but consistent)
- Fundraising dinners and cultural events
- Grants (local government, philanthropic bodies, community funds)
- Corporate sponsorships (with transparency)
- Online campaigns tied to specific projects
- Partnerships with other diaspora groups for larger funding bids

3) Business Models for Sustainability

Nonprofits do not have to be poor. The question is: **how do you sustain your work ethically?**

Possible models:

- Social enterprise (e.g., cultural catering, events services, community training workshops)
- Skills programs that generate small income (e.g., certification prep, language support, tutoring)
- Consultancy partnerships (cultural competency training for institutions)

4) Conflict of Interest and Crisis Management

This is where many organisations collapse.

A conflict of interest happens when:

- a leader benefits financially from a decision,
- contracts go to friends without due process, or
- personal grudges shape organisational choices.

Your protection is:

- declaring conflicts openly,
- independent oversight,
- transparent procurement rules, and
- audited financial statements.

And for crisis management:

- Have a crisis committee
- Draft a response protocol
- Protect victims, protect evidence, protect the mission
- Communicate calmly and truthfully—never emotionally or defensively

Let me say this clearly:

You can survive external pressure, but internal division can destroy everything you built.
Unity is not the absence of disagreement. Unity is having rules that allow disagreement without collapse.

Talking Point 3: Settlement Challenges, Networking, and Business Opportunities

Now let's speak about daily realities in the diaspora.

Settlement is not just finding a house. Settlement includes:

- understanding systems,
- building social capital,
- accessing employment pathways, and
- healing the emotional strain of migration.

Many of our people face:

- recognition of qualifications
- lack of local experience
- language barriers for some
- intergenerational tension (parents and children adapting differently)
- isolation and mental health pressures

So how do we respond?

1) Build a Settlement Support Ecosystem

Your organisation can create:

- job readiness workshops
- mentorship for youth and new arrivals
- study support and tutoring
- navigation sessions: healthcare, schools, legal aid, tenancy rights
- culturally safe spaces for women and families

2) Turn Networking into Outcomes

Networking is not taking photos at events. Networking is **strategic relationship building**.

I recommend:

- a quarterly “skills and services directory” of members
- professional meetups by sector (health, trades, business, IT, community services)
- partnerships with local chambers of commerce
- leadership training for youth and women

3) Promote Business and Economic Empowerment

A strong diaspora grows when households become stable and businesses grow.

Practical initiatives:

- a micro-business support circle (business basics, tax registration, marketing)
- cooperative buying groups (reduce cost, support member businesses)
- “buy-from-our-own” campaigns with quality standards
- joint ventures—where trust is backed by written agreements, not just friendships

Because we must be honest:

Love is important, but in business, **clarity is also love**.

Written agreements protect relationships.

A Shared Vision: What Success Looks Like

Let me paint a picture of success.

Success is not just having an organisation name and a yearly party.

Success is:

- a youth mentorship program producing graduates and leaders

- families accessing support before crisis becomes tragedy
- women feeling safe, respected, and protected
- men being equipped to lead with responsibility and emotional maturity
- a community that can sit with government agencies and speak with one voice
- businesses launched, careers advanced, and opportunities shared

In other words:

a community that is not merely surviving—but building.

Closing / Call to Action

My brothers and sisters, Liberia has taught us that when division wins, everyone loses. But when unity becomes practical—when unity becomes policy, structure, discipline, and service—then the diaspora becomes a powerful force for stability and development.

So tonight I leave you with three commitments:

1. **Commit to mission over ego.**
2. **Commit to structure over confusion.**
3. **Commit to service over status.**

If we do this, this organisation will not just exist—it will lead.

Thank you for inviting me. Thank you for your resilience. Thank you for your vision. May God bless our community, and may our unity become our legacy.

I appreciate you, and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you!