



# **Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and Development in Crisis?**

**A Strategic Review with a special focus on West Africa**

**Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery  
April 2005**

# Table of Contents

<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>List of Acronyms .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Youth, conflict, and the international policy environment.....</b>	<b>14</b>
The conflict prevention agenda .....	15
The youth agenda .....	19
The development agenda: youth, unemployment and the MDGs .....	22
Towards a new policy framework .....	24
<b>Review of the literature.....</b>	<b>27</b>
What is youth?.....	28
Youth and violent conflict.....	31
Why is youth in crisis? .....	36
Non-violent responses to crisis?.....	44
Conclusions .....	48
<b>Review of UNDP programming .....</b>	<b>54</b>
UNDP and youth .....	55
Selected youth-related programmes and projects.....	56
UNDP youth-related activities and programming in Africa .....	66
Responding to youth issues in existing programming .....	70
Conclusions and recommendations .....	72
<b>Review of UN system and other programming .....</b>	<b>79</b>
West Africa Focus: Sierra Leone and Liberia.....	79
International agency work on youth and violent conflict.....	84
Lessons to be learned .....	106
Conclusions .....	111
<b>Conclusions and recommendations on the way forward.....</b>	<b>117</b>
Initial conclusions: implications and best practices for policies and programmes .....	118
Towards a framework for youth, violent conflict and development .....	123

Recommendations on the way forward ..... 124

**Annex 1: Other UNDP youth-related projects ..... 127**

**Annex 2: List of organisations and individuals consulted ..... 137**

## Preface

---

The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), as the focal point for conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery in UNDP, is leading an initiative on youth and violent conflict with a focus on West Africa, in collaboration with the Regional Bureau for Africa. While there is an understanding of the basic facets and dynamics of conflict, there are many dimensions to violent conflict, which remain under-analysed. Factors such as natural resources, water, land tenure, ethnicity and youth are generally accepted as being significant in the evolving conflict prevention agenda but it cannot be said that they are fully understood. Thus, youth as a factor in violent conflict was selected as an issue that warranted special attention and this initiative emerged.

This initiative was intended to help UNDP better understand the intersections between youth and violent conflict as a basis for reorienting UNDP's thinking, approaches and planning on this issue. It was conceived as having three components: knowledge building, policy development, and programmatic responses.

Before developing policy for UNDP or integrated programming, it is important to first understand the problem of youth and violent conflict, analyse existing responses addressing the problem, and consider whether lessons have already been drawn and applied. While this initiative starts from the perspective of UNDP, the development arm of the UN should not approach this problem in isolation from other parts of the system. Therefore, it is important and necessary that this initiative is linked to other efforts both within and outside of UNDP, and that this first analytical and mapping exercise draw on the experience of others already active in this area.

Although the youth issue and the relationship between youth and violent conflict is indeed a global phenomenon, the initiative focuses on a particular region to provide context and to pilot programming ideas. The sub-region of West Africa was chosen because of its history of civil wars, the identification of these conflicts with youth and child soldiers, and the fear that without an adequate response to the youth situation, armed conflict may reoccur or be sustained in the region. Nevertheless, the analysis, conclusions and recommendations from this initiative may equally apply to other regions as well.

## Acknowledgements

---

The review in no way expresses the official views or policies of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, the Regional Bureau for Africa or UNDP.

Many people in UNDP and the UN system provided assistance and support during the preparation of this review:

Kathleen Cravero, Julia Taft, Flavia Pansieri, Jamal Benomar, Sam Barnes, Celine Moyroud, Caroline Mueke, Yasumitsu Doken, Elizabeth Lwanga, Jeffrey Avina, Marie Dimond, Babacar Cisse, Comfort Tetteh, Kunzang Chilyupa, Mounir Tarbet, Marc-Andre Franche, Mima Perisic, Youssef Mahmoud, and Agostinho Zacarias.

The authors would also like to thank the UNDP Resident Representatives and their offices who facilitated the field research for this study and the UNDP country offices who supported this research by providing project documentation and further information during the course of this work.

A full list of people consulted during the course of the review can be found in Annex 3.

The review was authored by:

Michi Ebata (Introduction, Chapter 1 and Conclusions)

Valeria Izzi and Alexandra Lenton (Chapter 2)

Eno Ngjela (Chapter 3)

Peter Sampson, with research assistance from Jennifer MacNaughtan (Chapter 4)

With writing and editing contributions from Jane Lowicki-Zucca

The review was edited by Andrew Wilson and Michi Ebata

## List of Acronyms

---

BCPR	UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
C&Y	Children and Youth at the World Bank
COPS	Country Operations Plans at UNHCR
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration
DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office
EDF	European Development Fund
GNP	Gross National Product
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HDR	Human Development Report
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
ILO	International Labour Organization
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IO	International Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MYFF	Multi-Year Funding Framework
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NHDR	National Human Development Report
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCIA	Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBA	UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
YEN	Youth Employment Network

## Executive Summary

---

- The global youth population – those aged between 15 and 24 – comprise 18% of the world's population or more than 1 billion people, 85% of which live in developing countries. There are six billion people in the world today; 2.8 billion are under the age of 24, and 1.8 billion under the age of 14. Therefore, up to 48% of the world's population is under the age of 24, and many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and in other developing regions have predominantly young populations. The ILO estimates nearly half of the world's unemployed are youth or more than 88 million youth.
- While youth are growing in number and faced with limited education opportunities, unemployment, the HIV/AIDS crisis, war and other forms of violence, there is increasing concern and alarm about 'youth' as obstacles to the consolidation of peace and development.
- Understanding and hence responding to youth and violent conflict requires a framework that reflects the complexities of the youth situation and of their transition to adulthood in societies under pressure. The issue of youth and violent conflict concerns more than youth, it is a reflection of society in crisis and hence of development itself. If a society's values, norms, customs, practices, structures and institutions are under threat and such changes in turn threaten the development of its children into youth and then adults, then that society cannot sustain itself.
- The state, government, civil society, the economy, the private sector, and the community are all predicated on notions of adulthood; they all require the participation of adults in order to function. If youth are unable to fully make this transition to the minimal conditions of adulthood, then such structures are unsustainable and will either fracture or mutate in unforeseen ways.

### **Youth, conflict, and the international policy environment**

- Although there is no agreed international framework for analysing and responding to youth and violent conflict, a number of policy instruments are relevant to the issue. Three main policy streams can be seen: (a) the "conflict prevention agenda" which places youth within the causes, conditions and dynamics of conflict (b) the "youth agenda" which treats conflict or post-conflict situations as simply one of the many environments that youth as a distinct group must navigate as they grow up (c) the "development agenda" as defined by the MDGs which focuses mainly on employment as a solution for a perceived youth crisis.
- The ways in which these separate policy frameworks attempt to explain the intersections between youth and violent conflict are inadequate, but their efforts to link the youth and violent conflict together demonstrate the increasing importance attached to the problem.

- A few themes recur in these instruments - youth unemployment as a factor in youth violence, exploding youth populations, and limited youth participation in governance. In view of the limited guidance offered by these instruments and their one-sided assumptions about youth, and their segmented and alarmist approach, a better-informed framework is urgently needed.

## **Review of the literature**

- The meaning of youth, and the way society regards youth, vary across time and space, as well as within societies. It can be defined chronologically (as a period between certain ages), functionally (a transition from childhood to adulthood marked by rituals or physical changes), and culturally (the role that individuals play in a given social context).
- The literature suggests that the idea of a single, gender-equal age of maturity is a Western one not shared by many other societies. Such an idea also ignores a crucial gender dimension, in which youth is often the time when “the world expands for boys and contracts for girls.” In the context of violence, it can be seen that there is a “*securitisation*” of the issue of youth, in which analyses of young people’s participation in fighting are generalised as if they were applicable to the all youth.
- The three explanations most often applied to youth violence – demographic pressure, coercion and a “youth crisis” – often ignore the diversity of ways in which youth interacts with other forms of identity, and separate the issue from the wider cultural, social, political and economic context.

## **Review of UNDP programming**

- Although youth is not a separate UNDP practice area, UNDP programmes and projects around the world deal with youth issues in several dimensions. Youth participation in post-conflict recovery has been part of programming in the former Yugoslavia, and the reintegration of young ex-combatants has been supported in Afghanistan, Republic of Congo and Niger. Small-scale interventions in Colombia, Nepal and Lebanon have a strong emphasis on community work with a conflict prevention and peace education dimension.
- In general, training and skills development is the most frequent approach of existing UNDP youth interventions, along with youth employment programmes and support for the mainstreaming of youth issues in policy making. UNDP has also supported the formulation of national youth policies, devoted NHDRs to youth and worked through UNVs on youth issues.
- For the most part, these interventions have been small, ad hoc and of limited duration. With few exceptions, projects have reached only small numbers of youth and have not reached the vast majority of youth in societies. Although many projects and activities stress participation and consultation with youth,



there is an over-reliance on youth leaders, graduates and youth organisations when it is not clear which youth they represent.

## **Review of UN system and other programming**

- A number of organisations are engaged in activities related to youth and violent conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone including UN agencies such as UNICEF, and UNHCR, IFIs like the World Bank, bilateral donors such as USAID and GTZ, and NGOs such as CARE International. While the focuses of such programmes vary according to organisational mandates, these organisations are most active in the youth employment, education and DDR fields. While assistance to youth has been provided by international agencies, the resources invested are only a small fraction of what is necessary to address the magnitude of the problem.
- Representatives from UN and international agencies in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal all argued for the importance of working to more effectively engage youth as a vulnerable community that is of key demographic and socio-political importance for peace and development. They all also stated the danger of the growing number of disenfranchised youth, with few opportunities to earn their livelihoods, as a threat to stability in the entire sub-region. A common concern was youth unemployment (in itself linked to education, health and DDR in post-conflict countries), largely seen as a security prerogative, rather than as a development objective.
- While donors and international aid agencies have recognised the need to ensure more participation by youth, in practice, levels of youth participation are insufficient to achieve long-lasting and sustainable impact.

## **Recommendations**

- Leading UN agencies, such as UNDP and UNICEF, the World Bank, donors and NGOs should institute a consultative process to figure out how the international community can help governments and populations respond to the challenge of youth and violent conflict. This includes ensuring the 10 year review of the World Programme of Action on Youth and the GA discussion on MDGs explores the intersections between youth and violent conflict, based on a better understanding of violent conflict and encouraging the conflict prevention agenda to adopt a more sophisticated understanding of youth.
- Adopt a working definition of youth that accounts for their diversity and does not treat them as one homogenous group. Programmes and activities need to specify who they mean by youth and which youth they are trying to reach.
- Understand that youth is a fluid category marking the transition from childhood to adulthood, where identities multiply and shift, and contradictions are intrinsic to the process. Programmes need to be context-specific but continually evaluated to ensure they remain pertinent to the evolving needs of youth, the challenges they face and the mechanisms they adopt to cope with their environment.

- Place youth at the centre of the process rather than as a target group to be consulted, from the assessment of the problem, through programme design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. Youth participation needs to move beyond rhetoric to practice, and beyond the focus on youth activists and youth organisations, to involving marginalised youth.
- Ensure programmes do not unintentionally reflect a fear of youth, particularly by ensuring that programmes and participatory processes reach out to the most problematic youth and not just the most articulate and engaged youth leaders who make easy interlocutors for international actors.
- Do not treat youth as the problem or solution. Targeting programmes to youth does not mean identifying them as something unique or separate from their societies. Societies and communities need to be mobilised, not just one particular age group. Therefore holistic and crosscutting approaches offer the most useful framework.
- Ensure that girls and young women do not “disappear” by recognising that youth includes young men and young women, boys and girls. In some contexts, girls and young women may be harder to reach but this obstacle should not be an excuse for overlooking them. A gender-sensitive approach involves more than just inviting more girls to participate, it requires a better understanding of the intersections of girls and violent conflict.
- Ensure programmes and activities are conflict-sensitive and do not contribute to the conditions and motivations that encourage youth to engage in violence and to withdraw from society. Anything that increases or aggravates feelings of distrust, resentment, loss of status and so forth are likely to affect youth more than other age groups. International actors must consider the perceptions of their efforts by youth in addition to the intended outcomes and impacts.
- Work within national strategies and policies on youth, or provide support for the development of national strategies and policies where none exist, particularly in ensuring that national policies reflect best practice and avoid the problems enumerated throughout this review.
- Above all, ensure a “do no harm” approach that does not create false expectations among youth with promises of projects and funding that will suddenly and visibly improve their lives. Adopting a realistic and modest approach more accurately reflects the situation that exists whereas ambitious wish lists of activities that are unlikely to materialise suggest naivety and are misleading to youth.
- The issue of youth and violent conflict is not the purview of any single agency or organisation, not only because the problem cuts across mandates and across peace, security and development agendas, but also because the magnitude of the problem requires the contributions of all actors. Ameliorating and improving the situation of youth requires the mobilisation of societies, governments and the international community. Collaboration amongst international agencies is a prerequisite.

## **UNDP**

In addition to the recommendations above, UNDP should give consideration to the specific recommendations below pertaining to its unique role and capacities:

- UNDP needs to recognise the changing dynamics in developing societies and ensure that its current work reflects these changes by giving priority to youth as an important factor in development.
- UNDP should use its close relationship with governments to assist national stakeholders develop and implement national youth strategies and policies through an interactive process involving youth.
- UNDP, in partnership with others, could play an advocacy role within the UN system to draw attention to the situation of youth as a factor in development, peace and security.

## Introduction

---

*There is such a high percentage of young people who see the future as something totally black... If you open even a small window for them to see the sky, it will be a tremendous force for change. But they have to be able to see the sky.*

*- Mahmoud Abaza, Egyptian Wafd Party<sup>1</sup>*

The UN High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change refers to youth as a potential threat to security; that a “surging youth population” combined with unemployment, urbanisation and other factors can lead to violence or a relapse into conflict. Young men in West Africa have been characterised as a “lost generation”, part of a “coming anarchy” or some other threatening manifestation, while young women are often seen as helpless victims bearing the consequences of violence. Other reports view “[t]he situation of youth at risk in Africa [as] one of acute crisis.”<sup>2</sup>

The global youth population - those aged between 15 and 24<sup>3</sup> - comprise 18% of the world’s population or more than 1 billion people, 85% of which live in developing countries. The ILO estimates nearly half of the world’s unemployed are youth or more than 88 million people. Moreover, up to 48% of the world’s population is under the age of 24, and many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and in other developing regions have predominantly young populations.

While youth are growing in number and faced with fewer education opportunities, unemployment, the HIV/AIDS crisis, war and other forms of violence, there is increasing concern, even alarm, about ‘youth’ and the conditions that may encourage their participation in perpetuating violence and preventing the consolidation of peace and development.

### ***Framing the issue: youth as problem or youth as solution?***

It is easy to make simplistic assertions about the negative roles of youth without fully understanding the connections between youth and violence. There is often an automatic tendency to problematise youth as a factor in violent conflict<sup>4</sup> while overlooking their many positive contributions to society, including their potential role in sustaining the social fabric and peace, as well as their survival in impossible environments.

---

<sup>1</sup> New York Times, 6 March 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Strategy Paper on Youth in Africa: A Focus on the Most Vulnerable Groups, Paper prepared for Expert Group Meeting on Urban Youth Employment, Nairobi 21-25 June 2004.

<sup>3</sup> This age-based definition of youth was agreed by the UN General Assembly, see GA RES A/40/256 §219. Statistical information provided by World Program of Action on Youth and DESA.

<sup>4</sup> Violent conflict here is taken to mean sustained violence around some stated political aim between 2 or more organised groups that generally includes the government.

Even this dichotomy of youth as problem or youth as solution, perpetrator or victim, as economic asset or resource for change is limiting as a framework for understanding the complexity of the youth situation in developing countries. It is further limited by the fact that the concept of youth is often approached as an all-encompassing category, as a coherent group where differences according to gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality or even by experience are secondary to a common identification of youth-hood.

To move beyond this superficial depiction of youth, an analysis of youth and violent conflict cannot overlook the larger crisis that is afflicting young people, as well as the richness of their experience and potential in coping with the environment that surrounds them. It requires probing questions of youth identity, marginalisation – political, economic, social, and communal; the impact of the HIV/AIDS crisis; youth unemployment, the breakdown of social bonds and the family structure; questions of political participation and representation; gender differences; urbanisation pressures; as well as the problem of child soldiers, their demobilisation and reintegration. These challenges are redefining adolescence, which itself is “a critical phase in human development when patterns of interpersonal, social and civic behaviour are shaped and solidified.”<sup>5</sup>

Understanding and hence responding to youth and violent conflict requires a framework that reflects the complexities of the youth situation and of their transition to adulthood in societies under pressure. The issue of youth and violent conflict concerns more than youth, it is a reflection of society in crisis and hence of development itself. If a society’s values, norms, customs, practices, structures and institutions are under threat and such changes in turn threaten the development of its children into youth and then adults, then that society cannot sustain itself.

The state, government, civil society, the economy, the private sector, and the community are all predicated on notions of adulthood; they all require the participation of adults in order to function.<sup>6</sup> If youth are unable to fully make this transition to the minimal conditions of adulthood, then such structures are unsustainable and will either fracture or mutate in unforeseen ways. An understanding of the intersections between youth, violent conflict and society is a way of re-examining development and developing societies. Youth, those who engage in violence and especially those who do not, are located at the junctures between development, security, peace and conflict.

The location of youth at these intersections is most evident in Sub-Saharan Africa, the only region in the world where absolute poverty has been increasing. For the continent, the 1980s were labelled “the lost decade” when the gains from independence began to reverse. The children born during that decade are today’s youth. It is well-established that conditions experienced in early childhood influences an individual’s development, with malnourishment and poor health creating impediments to learning, which is further exacerbated by poor education and the pressures of surviving harsh environments.

---

<sup>5</sup> Marc Sommers, *Youth Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies A Field Guide*, Save the Children, 2001, p. 5

<sup>6</sup> Adulthood is not well defined, but it is commonly understood to mean self-determination, maturity, fully developed, independence, responsibility and accountability for decision-making.

Where there has been extreme poverty and malnourishment in Africa, those youth have been disadvantaged from birth. This is not to suggest that Africa's youth are less capable, but that the environments for youth in different parts of Africa have created more aggravating obstacles.

Moreover, since it cannot be claimed that Africa was "found" in the 90s or at the beginning of this century, those children have grown up in societies whose development has been stalling or moving inexorably backwards. These children are the direct products of the development experiments propounded by international aid organisations of structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s, good governance in the 1990s and the MDGs of late. Youth are in crisis because their societies are in crisis.

### *Outline of the review*

This strategic review explores the intersections between youth and violent conflict in the context of their societies in order to better understand what the youth factor is and how relevant it is to understanding violent conflict. It seeks to better understand the problem, contribute to the debate, and help develop a framework by mapping key ideas, actors, activities and trends. The review is divided into five chapters:

- a review of existing UN policy frameworks
- a review of the research literature
- a review of UNDP programming and approaches
- a review of programming and approaches by other UN actors, donors and NGOs
- conclusions and recommendations on the way forward

The review only considers international actors' responses to the youth challenge, leaving aside for the moment, national and local responses. The review is neither a catalogue of activities nor a compendium of best practices; it presents a collection of varied examples as an illustration of different approaches based primarily on desk research. It does not evaluate the impact or success of programmes but tries to draw attention to some of the assumptions about youth and violent conflict in the approaches taken. There is also an emphasis in the review on Africa, West Africa in particular. Nevertheless, this strategic review presents cases from all parts of the world and offers recommendations that are not specific to any particular region.

The first chapter provides an overview of current policy frameworks relevant to this theme. In particular, it examines two putatively separate "agendas": the conflict prevention agenda and the youth agenda (both in its development and its human rights aspects). While the conflict prevention agenda has relatively little to say about youth, policies on youth only superficially consider the dimensions of violent conflict. In recent years there is a growing trend within both to recognising the importance of linking the two agendas together, as well as making connections to the development agenda as defined by the MDGs and its concern with youth.

The review of the research literature in the second chapter explores the youth factor in violent conflict, and the linkages between youth and violence, by examining academic

and other specialised literature. It begins by posing the question: what is youth? It suggests that youth is an ambiguous category, defined as an age group, as a social construct, and by gender. Focusing on the developing world, it critiques three explanations for youth violence: demography, coercion and a youth crisis. It asks whether youth in fact are in crisis, or is it the societies in which youth find themselves that are in crisis. It then considers the two main non-violent responses by youth to this crisis, migration and participation in religious movements. It concludes that youth interacts with other forms of identity in ways that are fluid and dynamic and therefore it is imperative to avoid simplistic interpretations of youth and the youth crisis.

In the third chapter, the review of UNDP activities in this area identifies the extent to which UNDP as a whole and particularly its country offices have tackled youth issues, with a special interest in conflict and post-conflict situations. This chapter maps the range of interventions and approaches by UNDP country offices providing ample evidence that UNDP country offices are already implementing projects and programmes to address issues enhancing young people's role in development processes not only as target groups but as agents of social change. It profiles a range of UNDP programmes from Lebanon to Kosovo to Nepal to Zambia, as well as drawing attention to linkages between UNV and UNDP in youth issues and NHDRS dedicated to youth. The chapter strongly advocates for a more concerted effort by UNDP to introduce youth into its main practice areas and to focus more country level efforts on youth.

The fourth chapter, a review of actors both within and outside the UN system (in particular UNICEF, the World Bank, donors and NGOs), provides a brief overview of selected activities undertaken by them in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Based on both desk research and a field mission to West Africa, the chapter finds that while some activities specifically target youth, often agencies assume that everything they do concerns youth. It notes that international agencies are most active in youth employment, education and DDR but their work is constrained by funding shortfalls in post-conflict situations, with fewer resources available once a humanitarian crisis is considered to be over.

The strategic review ends with a chapter drawing initial conclusions and offering suggestions for moving the agenda forward. It starts with the importance of properly characterising youth, the challenges of meaningful youth participation, obstacles to youth programming and best approaches for youth programming. It ends with recommendations for furthering an agenda on youth and violent conflict, for programming and for UNDP in particular.

### *Towards a shared framework*

What clearly emerges from this review is that the “problem” of youth and violent conflict is a serious concern to many within UNDP and elsewhere, which has led to a myriad of different initiatives. However, such ad hoc and disparate efforts are not enough to address the scale and scope of the problem. Indeed, there are few answers as to what should be done or even how to frame the problem and potential solutions.

A common framework targeting the relationship between youth, violent conflict and sustainable peace needs to be articulated, debated and applied. However, a meaningful framework can only emerge from better, deeper and fuller understanding. This strategic

review is intended to further this understanding, help define a shared framework, and thereby help address the challenges posed by youth and violent conflict.



## Youth, conflict, and the international policy environment

---

*Addressing the needs and aspirations of adolescence is therefore an important aspect of long-term prevention strategy. In addition, youth can also be an important resource for peace and conflict prevention.*

*- Secretary-General's Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict*

This chapter examines existing UN policy frameworks that touch upon the issue of youth and violent conflict. Among the major policy frameworks discussed are:

- The Report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change
- Security Council Resolutions on West Africa
- UNDP Support to the UN Regional Strategy for West Africa
- Secretary-General's Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Children and Armed Conflict (The Machel Report)
- World Programme of Action on Youth
- Youth Employment Network
- Millennium Declaration and the MDGs

While a number of policy instruments directly or indirectly provide guidance on youth and violent conflict, a coherent or agreed framework for analysing and responding to youth and violent conflict does not exist. Policies devised as part of what we might call the “conflict prevention agenda” haphazardly refer to youth in analyses of the causes, conditions and dynamics of conflict; in contrast, the “youth agenda” focuses on youth as a distinct group navigating their environment, with violent conflict or a post-conflict situation providing one such environment. While the first fails to unpack the concept of youth, the second fails to explain the context of violent conflict. However in their attempts to link the two concepts together, both agendas draw attention to the relationship between youth and violent conflict. Individually, neither framework is sufficient, but the way in which they are converging also offers little help in defining the scope or parameters of the issue, identifying priority areas or even defining objectives. Finally, a third policy stream, which can be called the “development agenda”, currently driven by the MDGs, is also limited because it focuses mainly on one particular aspect of the issue (employment as a solution for a perceived youth crisis).

The ways in which such policy frameworks touch on the issue of youth and violent conflict, as well as the ways they omit or ignore it, are indicative of the problems of framing the relationship between youth and violent conflict. A limited number of themes permeate these instruments including youth unemployment as a factor in leading youth to participate in violence, the impact of various crises on youth, exploding youth populations and youth participation, but they are limiting because they take a segmented and often alarmist approach. A holistic, comprehensive, and even systematic framework that captures and hence responds to the complexity of the youth situation in relation to violent conflict has not yet emerged.

## The conflict prevention agenda

### *How youth is addressed within the conflict prevention agenda*

Outlining the broad framework for collective security and the UN's role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Report by the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change points to youth as a threat to security.<sup>7</sup> In the only personal anecdote throughout the report, one woman during a consultation in Africa, asked “how have we let what should be our greatest asset, youth, become a threat to our security.”<sup>8</sup> The report associates youth unemployment as both a cause of violence and a consequence of failed post-conflict peace-building potentially leading to further violence. Furthermore, it notes that women and youth are disproportionately poor.

The report reiterates and reinforces what is already found in Security Council Resolutions and statements on West Africa<sup>9</sup> linking youth and conflict, which point to youth unemployment as a prime condition for and cause of violence. During the Security Council mission to West Africa in June 2003, “in every country visited, the mission heard about the problem of unemployment, especially among young people, and how this was a perennial source of instability in West Africa.”<sup>10</sup> In the second Security Council mission to the region in June 2004, Council members heard about “the importance of tackling the major socio-economic problems, which, if left unresolved could present a risk to the country's security. All agreed that creating jobs and economic growth, particularly for young people, was crucial.”<sup>11</sup> The Security Council has also recommended that devising “a practical and concerted regional approach” to youth

---

<sup>7</sup> A more secure world: *Our shared responsibility*, Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, United Nations 2004.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p 24.

<sup>9</sup> Report of the Security Council mission to West Africa, 20-29 June 2004, S/2004/525; Security Council meeting to discuss mission report; Report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat sub-regional and cross-border problems in West Africa, S/2004/200.

<sup>10</sup> Report of the Security Council mission to West Africa 26 June-5 July 2003 S/2003/688 §76.

<sup>11</sup> *Op cit.*, S/2004/525, §35, p. 11.

unemployment should be an important area of work for the UN Office for West Africa.<sup>12</sup>

The Secretary General's report on combating conflict in West Africa revolves around children and child soldiers but mentions in brief war-affected youth, youth unemployment, a culture of youth violence and otherwise refers to youth as children who have grown into adulthood through conflict. UNDP's support to the UN West Africa regional strategy has as a main priority for assistance: "the vast numbers of unemployed youth who are easily drawn into the conflict, often for lack of other alternatives," and therefore conflict prevention and peace-building strategies should have a "special focus on unemployed youth."<sup>13</sup> However, this depiction of unemployed youth as a condition and cause of conflict is not restricted to strategies for West Africa, it is also evident in the overarching agenda for conflict prevention contained in the Secretary-General's report on the prevention of armed conflict. In his report, the Secretary-General notes that

*Young people with limited education and few employment opportunities often provide fertile recruiting ground for parties to a conflict. Their lack of hope for the future can fuel disaffection with society and make them susceptible to the blandishments of those who advocate armed conflict. This problem can be especially acute in countries that have a "youth bulge", a population comprised of a large number of youth compared to other age groups.... Addressing the needs and aspirations of adolescence is therefore an important aspect of long-term prevention strategy. In addition, youth can also be an important resource for peace and conflict prevention.<sup>14</sup>*

The High-Level Panel Report, Security Council resolutions related to West Africa, UNDP project and the Secretary-General's report on the prevention of armed conflict are concerned with violent conflict, prevention and peace-building in the largest sense, not youth and violent conflict. Nevertheless, they contain assumptions associating youth with violence. They suggest that without employment or productive alternatives, youth are prone to engage in violence, youth possess their own culture of violence, youth are a threat to society, and they are disaffected and marginalised. These assumptions are not examined; they implicitly refer to young men and not young women and moreover they juxtapose employed youth against violent youth without allowing for any other identity or the possibility that youth with jobs can still engage in violence.

Furthermore, while youth are seen as agents of violence, they are not necessarily identified as full actors in peace settings. They are denied an active role as civil society actors, political constituents or participants in measures to redress violence. While youth are sometimes urged to be peacemakers, in responses to conflict through governance

---

<sup>12</sup> *Op cit.*, S/2003/688 §76. UNOWA is expected to submit a report on youth unemployment in West Africa to the Security Council in mid-2005.

<sup>13</sup> UNDP Support to the UN Regional Strategy for West Africa.

<sup>14</sup> *Prevention of Armed Conflict* Report of the Secretary-General, 7 June 2001, A/55/985- S/2001/574, §124.

and political measures youth are not mentioned. For example, while the Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict establishes that the responsibility for conflict prevention rests with member states and will only be successful in so far as there is national ownership, it does not identify where that ownership lies, who bears that responsibility for holding leaders accountable and from where in society change is supposed to emanate. Such recommendations do not reflect a changing context, with the West African context largely defined by very young populations.

### *Youth and the 'Children and Armed Conflict' agenda*

In addition to general conflict-related agendas, there are other policy and legal instruments that establish a strong linkage between violent conflict and young people. In particular, the issue of youth is partially addressed in the children and armed conflict agenda. This agenda is mainly expressed through the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989,<sup>15</sup> and the 1996 Graça Machel Report on Children and Armed Conflict.<sup>16</sup> Clearly, these apply specifically to children rather than youth, but they do serve youth under the age of 18 and have implications for the protection of all youth because the rights they advocate do not end at the age of 18.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides protection to every individual under the age of 18 (unless the applicable national law states majority is attained earlier). It is the most universally accepted human rights instrument<sup>17</sup> that legally binds states to its provisions and unequivocally sets forth the rights of children, the protection of children and tough standards to ensure their well-being in every part of the world, particularly where children are affected by armed conflict, inadequate social conditions, hunger and illiteracy. The Convention was reinforced in 2002 by the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which sought to protect children under 15 from conscription into national armies and for those under 18, recruitment by non-governmental armed groups.<sup>18</sup>

The Convention and the Optional Protocol established a precedent of strong legal norms for the protection of children, helped to establish norms, standards and expectations about protection, and created practices within the international community and within states of fulfilling the commitments in the Convention. It also established a legal framework of human rights consisting of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights accorded to every child as indivisible, interrelated and non-hierarchical. The convention established the child as the subject of their own rights, as individuals and as members of the family and the community.

While the Convention protects those youth under the age of 18, its near universal acceptance makes the absence of such a strong policy and rights framework for youth more evident. Nevertheless, the Convention establishes a system of norms and practices

---

<sup>15</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, A/RES/44/25, 20 November 1989.

<sup>16</sup> Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, A/51/306, 26 August 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Ratified by every country except the United States and Somalia.

<sup>18</sup> Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, A/RES/54/263.

against which governments and societies are measured. Youth over 18 may lose the enforcement protection offered by the convention, but the international values and customs that serve to protect the human rights of children, reinforced by the Declaration on Human Rights, remain as a standard of protection for youth and indeed all human beings to enable the realisation of their full potential.

### ***The Machel Report and the Special Representative for Children for Armed Conflict***

The Graça Machel Report builds on the principles established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Report both documents the impacts of armed conflict on children and proposes the elements of a comprehensive agenda for action to improve the protection and care of children in conflict situations. It demonstrates the centrality of these issues to the international human rights, peace and security and development agendas.<sup>19</sup> The report also draws attention specifically to youth, and to youth as human capital in conflict affected societies, advocating that “[y]oung people should be seen ... as survivors and active participants in creating solutions, not just as victims or problems.”<sup>20</sup> More than other agenda frameworks, this report highlights the unique pressures on youth in situations of armed conflict:

*All cultures recognize adolescence as a highly significant period in which young people learn future roles and incorporate the values and norms of their societies. The extreme and often prolonged circumstances of armed conflict interfere with identity development. ... Moreover, sudden changes in family circumstances, such as the death or disappearance of parents, can leave youth without guidance, role models or sustenance. During conflicts, some adolescents become responsible for the care of younger siblings. ... Despite all of this, adolescents, during or after wars, seldom receive any special attention or assistance. This is a matter of urgent concern.<sup>21</sup>*

If the values and norms of society are not transmitted to youth and by extension to future generations because of conflict, then that society must recover from more than just violent conflict.

On the recommendation of the Graça Machel Report, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict was established in 1997 to draw attention and respond to the plight of children affected by armed conflict.<sup>22</sup> In its role as advocate, catalyst and convenor, the Special Representative considers key issues affecting children in conflict situations including child soldiers, girls in war, HIV/AIDS, education, displaced children, sexual violence and so forth. While its mandate is restricted to those under 18, since children are in

---

<sup>19</sup> See Note by the Secretary-General introducing the Machel Report.

<sup>20</sup> Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, A/51/306, 26 August 1996. §32

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, §170.

<sup>22</sup> The rights of the child, A/RES/51/77 §35-38.

contact with youth as protectors, violators, heads of households, and so forth, by implication the work of the Office of the Special Representative extends to youth.

## The youth agenda

Distinct from the agenda to protect children, there is also a well-developed UN youth agenda, which focuses on the global situation of youth including violent conflict. Identified as *Empowering Youth for Development and Peace*, it is led by the Department Of Economic And Social Affairs (DESA), which houses the UN focal point on youth.<sup>23</sup> Throughout the evolution of this agenda, three basic themes are advocated: participation, development and peace. Whereas youth are considered to be a problem in most other policy frameworks, in this framework youth are elevated to the position of solution to the world's most fundamental problems. The approach is primarily on youth as the future of humanity, as an invaluable resource, as a positive force for change, and as activists.

*Young people represent agents, beneficiaries and victims of major societal changes and are generally confronted by a paradox: to seek to be integrated into an existing order or to serve as a force to transform that order.*<sup>24</sup>

As the key advocacy tool for youth, the youth agenda also serves to draw international attention to the precarious situation of youth, whose needs and aspirations are still largely unmet. This denial of one's potential is generating factors that are contributing "to the increased marginalization of young people from the larger society, which is dependent on youth for its continual renewal."<sup>25</sup> It starts from the premise that today's youth are living at a time of unprecedented and profound economic, political, social, cultural and environmental change, where "[y]oung people are particularly affected, because it means that their transition to adulthood is made more difficult."<sup>26</sup>

## ***International Youth Year and the World Programme of Action for Youth***

In 1985, the UN General Assembly called for the observance of the International Youth Year: Participation, Development and Peace to draw attention to the important role of young people and their potential contribution to development and the goals of the UN Charter.<sup>27</sup> On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Youth Year (1995), the UN adopted an international strategy to more effectively address the problems of young

---

<sup>23</sup> Youth at the United Nations [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin)

<sup>24</sup> A/RES/50/81 Annex Preamble

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, Annex §7.

<sup>26</sup> Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, Report of the Secretary-General, A/54/59 §11.

<sup>27</sup> A/RES/40/14 18 November 1985. This took place 20 years after the 1965 Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples by Member States at the UN.

people, to increase their participation in society and to make governments more responsive to the aspirations of youth.

The *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond* is a blueprint for action revolving around ten priority areas: education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, girls and young women, and youth participation.<sup>28</sup> It provides a policy framework as well as practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of youth. It “focuses in particular on measures to strengthen national capacities in the field of youth and to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for full, effective and constructive participation in society.”<sup>29</sup> It also underlines the need to scale up investments in youth, to create verifiable indicators for the priority areas and to ensure vulnerable or disadvantaged youth receive special attention. In 2001, five new areas were added: globalisation, information and communications technology, HIV/AIDS, conflict prevention and intergenerational issues. In 2005, there will be a 10-year review of the Programme.<sup>30</sup>

In 2003, the Programme launched a wide-ranging report that provides an overview of the global situation of young people by exploring the ten priority action areas and five areas of concern. The *World Youth Report* advocates that “[a]dolescents and young adults are an important target group for all social development efforts, since they are often disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment and social exclusion and since the impact of such conditions during young age will most likely influence the entire lifespan. At the same time, young people can also be a major resource in the social mobilization needed to combat these very problems.”<sup>31</sup> The report encapsulates the vision and hidden assumptions of the youth agenda.

Although this agenda differentiates youth according to region, gender, developing or industrialised country, it embodies a global approach encapsulating all youth in the world aged between 15 and 24. While the fact that the majority of youth live in developing countries ensures development challenges are highlighted, this is alongside a more comprehensive cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary agenda based on the assumption that youth have similar aspirations. Thus the youth agenda exhibits a global approach, creating global standards to meet the needs of youth, to ensure youth participation at the global level and even to create a global youth policy. In this global

---

<sup>28</sup> General Assembly Resolution World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, A/RES/50/81, 13 March 1996.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* Annex Statement of Purpose.

<sup>30</sup> The Programme is expected to incorporate the interests of youth through working with youth NGOs and through the World Youth Forum of the United Nations, of which there have been four sessions. These have been reinforced by international and intergovernmental conferences, in particular the First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, resulting in the *1998 Lisbon Declaration on Youth*, where governments committed themselves to developing national youth policies and operational programmes in consultation with youth, ensuring and encouraging the active participation of youth in society and in decision-making.

<sup>31</sup> *Op cit.*, A/54/59 §32.

as well as regional emphasis, there is a tendency to over-rely on youth organisations, youth delegates and representatives to global or regional bodies, such as the UN.

Nevertheless, the youth agenda acknowledges that the responsibility for implementation of the programme rests with national governments, which are expected to produce national youth policies and action plans based on processes that consult with youth. However, it is a prescriptive, mostly social, agenda more than a rights-based or impact or results-based framework. It does not have a conception of success other than a better world in which youth can live. Proposals for action urging governments to create jobs are admirable, but not instructive for overcoming the real obstacles that prevent job creation. Moreover, in calling for greater participation in decision-making as well as in society more generally, the youth agenda offers little explanation as to the added impact of a particular focus on youth, nor how to overcome the impediments that deny most citizens participation in their society. In some ways, the advocacy for the youth agenda undermines itself because it assumes the invaluable role of youth as peacemakers and future decision-makers is self-evident and under-emphasises the challenges that prevent youth from taking on these roles.

### *How conflict is addressed within the youth agenda*

Conflict was identified as one of five extra areas of concern in the situation of youth from 2001. Prior to this, the relationship between youth and violence was only considered within the problem of juvenile delinquency and the need to prevent violence and crime in society. In 1996, the World Programme began to note the “increasing difficulty for young people returning from armed conflict and confrontation in integrating into the community and gaining access to education and employment.”<sup>32</sup> The special focus on conflict emerged in recognition that young people are disproportionately affected by violent conflict, both as victims and as actual participants.

The World Programme outlines the impacts of conflict on youth and highlights the role youth should play in peace-building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, the role of youth and youth organisations in promoting peace and non-violence, and mobilising youth for post-conflict reconstruction. In this understanding of the relationship between youth and violent conflict, youth are treated as a special target group whose perspectives should be included in processes to prevent or end conflict, that without sensitivity to and inclusion of youth, such measures are incomplete. However, conflict is placed on a comparable and common analytical level as the other issue areas of poverty, girls and young women, leisure time and ICT, when such phenomena are not comparable. This points to a problem with the agenda but also a limited and problematic conception of violent conflict.

---

<sup>32</sup> A/RES/50/81 Annex 6(c)



## The development agenda: youth, unemployment and the MDGs

In addition to a general agenda for youth, the single most prominent issue to emerge as a concern in the international community is youth unemployment. Youth constitute nearly half of the world's unemployed but "while the youth population grew by 10.5% over the last 10 years to more than 1 billion in 2003, youth employment grew by only 0.2% suggesting that the growth in the number of young people is rapidly outstripping the ability of economies to provide them with jobs."<sup>33</sup> This is particularly problematic in developing countries where youth make up a larger portion of the workforce. Not surprisingly, "[t]he regions with the largest shares of youth within the working-age population (South Asia, MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa) fare worst in terms of youth unemployment."<sup>34</sup> If youth is a formative stage where one gains needed experience, then the lack of employment creates one more obstacle to the attainment of full adulthood with potentially harmful consequences for the economy and society.

*The link between youth unemployment and social exclusion has been clearly established; an inability to find a job creates a sense of vulnerability, uselessness and idleness among young people and can heighten the attraction of engaging in illegal activities. For many young people today, being without work means being without the chance to work themselves out of poverty.*<sup>35</sup>

If youth cannot escape poverty, neither can their families or their societies.

By including youth unemployment in the MDGs, the Millennium Declaration had an important and catalytic impact on drawing international attention to the problem of unemployed youth. Under target 16 in Goal 8, the resolution "[t]o develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work" is the only explicit reference to youth in the MDGs. While some of the MDGs have elements that target youth, in particular, achieving universal primary education using the literacy rate of 15-24 year olds as one indicator, promoting gender equality at all levels of education, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, mostly the MDGs are only implicitly relevant to the needs of youth. However, it is interesting to note that the MDG campaign is targeting youth as important advocates and partners for the MDGs. Youth are key actors for the achievement of the goals, but through their participation in the MDGs, youth can also be empowered and hence benefit from the attention on MDGs. As discussed below in the chapter on UNDP activities, UNDP has identified youth as a key partner in the Millennium campaign and is seeking to mobilise youth activism by holding 2015 summits in all regions, such as the Pan-African 2015 Summit held in Dakar in 2004.

---

<sup>33</sup> Global Employment Trends for Youth, ILO, August 2004.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* Overview

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* Foreword.

## ***The Youth Employment Network***

Under the auspices of the Millennium Declaration, the Youth Employment Network, a consortium of the ILO, World Bank and the UN was established to address the global challenge of youth unemployment. At the Millennium Summit, heads of states “resolved to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a chance to find decent and productive work.”<sup>36</sup> YEN emerged from a high-level policy network that set forth 4 principles or global priority policy areas, the 4 E’s: employability, employment creation, equity, entrepreneurship and a fifth one of environmental sustainability.

The YEN approach recognises that traditional international initiatives may have expressed a commitment to engaging youth groups as equal partners in the policy making process but often failed to do so. Consultation was often limited and the development of policy based on a “perceived notion of what is best for young people.”<sup>37</sup> The YEN seeks to change this by viewing young people as partners in devising solutions to a common problem and ensuring that its policy recommendations support the aspirations of young people rather than impose perceived needs upon them. The YEN seeks to ensure youth have a role rather than just “being viewed as a target group for which employment must be found.”<sup>38</sup>

The Youth Employment Network is seen as an instrument for the attainment of one of the targets under the MDGs but also as a contribution to the attainment of all the MDGs. The YEN advocates for the integration of a youth dimension into all comprehensive employment strategies, strong institutional support for youth employment policies, investment in education, training and life-long learning, and youth access to employment services and support. The YEN campaign also calls for an integrated, UN-system wide approach, stressing the fact it is not a programme but a network representing all sectors, multilateral, bilateral, corporate/private sector, and international NGOs. Youth employment is treated as an entry point to the broader employment agenda. In addition to policy development and advocacy, research and pooling experiences and knowledge, the YEN has sought to become more operational with activities in countries on the ground but this has met with limited success so far. Nevertheless, the YEN keeps youth unemployment on the international agenda, which will be the centre of discussion at the 2005 International Labour Conference.

## ***What did the MDGs miss?***

The MDGs with the Millennium Declaration<sup>39</sup> are driving the development agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; determining development priorities, shaping development funding and framing development policy. The ways in which the MDGs omit, include or refer to

---

<sup>36</sup> Also found in General Assembly Resolution A/RES/57/165, 16 January 2003.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

<sup>39</sup> United Nations Millennium Declaration, General Assembly Resolution A/RES/55/2, 18 September 2000.

youth, seek to use youth, and how youth groups attempt to influence the MDG agenda, also reveal underlying assumptions about youth. While some argue that youth are absent from the MDG agenda, others contend that the MDGs implicitly target young people. They are either “directly related to children, the youth of the next generation, or to issues of greater concern to young people, such as maternal health and HIV/AIDS.”<sup>40</sup> While there seems to be an assumption that youth are useful as agents or representatives of the MDG campaign, there is little to suggest that there has been a serious process of engagement or consultation with youth on how they view the MDGs. There also appears to be some confusion about whether the MDGs should target youth to meet the challenges for youth or to advance development in general, which would also benefit youth.

With respect to youth and violent conflict, the MDG framework promulgates an assumption that links youth unemployment and violent conflict, the risk that the lack of productive work makes youth vulnerable to recruitment for violent or illegal activities. In the 2005 Millennium Project Report, *Investing in Development: A practical plan to implement the Millennium Development Goals*, the nexus between poverty and conflict, identifies that “[w]ithout productive alternatives, youths, especially, may turn to violence out of frustration or for material gain.”<sup>41</sup> The report also refers to the “exploding” youth population and recognises greater conflict risks associated with demographic profiles of high child-to-adult ratios. Thus, like many other policy frameworks, the MDGs treat youth as a single identity group, and targets unemployment as a key factor in relation to violent conflict as well as juxtaposing employment against involvement in conflict.

## Towards a new policy framework

To date, the UN lacks a specific policy framework for youth and violent conflict that explains the intersections between the two, or offers realistic and implementable recommendations rather than ambitious wish lists. The policy frameworks in the conflict prevention, youth and development agendas that refer to the issue offer limited guidance because they are incomplete and imbued with one-sided assumptions about youth and their relationship to violent conflict. This can be seen in the fact that policies on youth only superficially consider the dimensions of violent conflict, that the conflict prevention agenda has relatively little to say about youth, and that the development agenda suffers somewhat from a limited focus on employment. A better-informed framework is urgently needed.

Such a framework for youth and violent conflict means much more than ensuring a jobs creation strategy is linked to education policy. A new framework should necessarily be holistic and crosscutting. The magnitude of the problem demands real investment in youth and their societies. It requires a shift in thinking from *consulting* with youth to putting youth - in all its diversity - *at the centre of the process* for developing policy, advocacy, programmes and so forth by creating space for their participation. It means

---

<sup>40</sup> Report of the Secretary General, World Youth Report 2005, A/60/61-E/2005/7 §8.

<sup>41</sup> *Investing in Development* Millennium Project Report, 2005, p. 42.

acknowledging and assuming that youth are multi-faceted, they are simultaneously individuals and part of society, are in transition from childhood to adulthood but retain a unique identity as youth, and they possess personal, social and public identities. Finally, it requires a stronger, more nuanced understanding of the context of societies in development, and a deeper, fuller and more comprehensive understanding of the intersections between youth and violent conflict in such societies.

The outlines of such a framework are explored in the concluding chapter of this document.

## **Bibliography**

- Convention on the Rights of the Child, A/RES/44/25, 20 November 1989.
- Economic and Social Council, World Youth Report 2003 Report of the Secretary-General E/CN.5/2003/4
- General Assembly, A/40/256
- General Assembly, A/52/83 Policies and Programmes Involving Youth 12 December 1997.
- General Assembly, A/54/59 Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, 5 January 1999.
- General Assembly, A/RES/50/81 World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond
- General Assembly, Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, 2000
- General Assembly, World Youth Report 2005 Report of the Secretary-General A/60/61 – E/2005/7
- Graca Machel, Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, A/51/306, 26 August 1996.
- New York Times, “Unexpected whiff of freedom proves bracing for the Mideast,” Neil MacFarquhar, 6 March 2005.
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, A/RES/54/263.
- Secretary-General, Report of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Armed Conflict, June 2001.
- Secretary-General, Report of the Secretary-General on Ways to Combat Sub-regional and Cross-border Problems in West Africa, S/2004/200.
- Security Council, Report of the Security Council mission to West Africa, 20-29 June 2004, S/2004/525; Security Council meeting to discuss mission report.
- UN Habitat, Strategy Paper on Youth in Africa: A Focus on the Most Vulnerable Groups, Paper prepared for Expert Group Meeting on Urban Youth Employment, UN Habitat, YEN and DESA, Nairobi, 21-25 June 2004.
- United Nations, Investing in Development (Millennium Project Report), 2005
- United Nations, World Youth Report 2003.
- United Nations. A more secure world: Our shared responsibility, Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, United Nations 2004.

## Review of the literature

---

*They are the worst people in the world and they are our children*  
- Liberian Chief, speaking of young Liberian fighters<sup>42</sup>

*If youth can be such a powerful force that can destroy a whole nation, why do people overlook our resources when working for peace?*  
- Rwandan Youth Movement Leader<sup>43</sup>

Most analyses of conflict in different parts of the world are starting to identify a “youth factor” as a key element in the generation of violence. The predominantly young population of the developing world is widely regarded as a potential or actual source of instability and violence. This “youth factor”, however, is rarely examined or questioned, and the linkage between youth and violence is more often assumed than explored.

### ***Which youth? What crisis?***

Youth is an ambiguous label. What is meant by youth, and who comprises this category, is often unclear. Does it make sense to speak of youth as a unified category? Do young people identify themselves as belonging to this social group? Are there common experiences felt by all young people around the world? Who creates the construct of youth, and whose realities does it reflect?

A similar confusion surrounds the concept of youth crisis. While there seems to be a shared understanding that youth is somehow “in crisis,” this concept is often used as an *a priori* assumption, and seldom defined. What do we mean by crisis? Are we witnessing a generalised “crisis of youth”? If so, are youth actors or victims of such a crisis – or both? Is there a crisis of society affecting youth, or is a crisis among the youth causing a societal crisis? Do young people *feel* in crisis, or are they *perceived* as being in crisis?

Finally, it is often assumed that a youth crisis leads to violence of various sorts – including the participation of young people in violent conflict, gang warfare, criminality, and other types of destructive behaviours. Once again, this relationship deserves closer investigation, as the linkage between youth and violent conflict is far from being pre-defined or automatic. Why do young people turn to violence in response to their crisis? Why don’t they?

This chapter tries to address these questions by looking at various sources of literature on youth. In so doing, it hopes to challenge some of the assumptions that surround current perspectives on youth and violent conflict, as well as to identify gaps and biases in the current discourse. By doing so, it aims to help policy makers and practitioners

---

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Ellis (1999:123)

<sup>43</sup> Interview by Peter Sampson.

make sense of an issue as complex as the involvement of young people in violent conflict.

### *Scope, methodology and structure*

The focus of the chapter is specifically on youth and violent conflict, rather than on violence in general. Violent conflict is a particular form of violence, defined here as the struggle between organised groups, with stated objectives, that use violence to reach such objectives. However, various forms of violence are not mutually exclusive, and the lines of separation are much more blurred than a rigid categorisation might suggest.

The chapter offers a desk review of research literature on youth and violent conflict, globally and on West Africa. Resources taken into consideration include academic literature produced by scholars, research institutes, and think tanks, as well as studies and reports by UN agencies, NGOs, bilateral donors.

While the focus of the initiative is specifically on West Africa, this chapter takes a wider look by examining the issue of youth and violent conflict in the broader context of the developing world.

The chapter starts by deconstructing the notion of youth, with particular attention to the different meanings that the concept of youth assumes in relation to gender. It continues by exploring the main theories emerging from the literature with regard to youth and violent conflict, concentrating in particular on theories that identify an underlying “youth crisis” as an explanation for youth violent behaviour. Next, it tackles the concept of youth crisis, its’ meaning and underlying assumptions. The chapter makes the point that youth responses to crisis are not necessarily violent – and analyses two such non-violent responses, namely migration (both South-North migration, and in-country migration towards big cities) and involvement in religious movements. The last section attempts to draw some key conclusions and policy recommendations.

### **What is youth?**

Defining youth is a problematic task. Definitions based on age offer a degree of objectivity, but overlook many important realities. To a large extent, youth is socially constructed, and it has less to do with age than with status and behaviour. The meaning of youth, and the way society regards youth, vary across time and space, as well as within societies. In particular, youth has an important gender dimension: boys and girls might experience being young in a considerably different way.

Hence, in addition to being defined *chronologically* (as a period of age between certain ages), youth is also defined *functionally* (involving a process of transition from childhood to adulthood, marked by rituals or physical changes), as well as *culturally* (pertaining to the role that individuals play in a given social context).

### *Youth as an age group*

Youth is defined by the United Nations as the age between 15 and 24. This definition is provided by the UN General Assembly, and is not legally binding.<sup>44</sup>

Individuals aged 15-18 are also included in the legal definition of children, according to international treaties. In particular, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines a “child” as everyone under the age of 18 (“unless, under the law applicable to the child, maturity is attained earlier” Article 1). Similarly, the African Charter for the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)<sup>45</sup> defines a “child” as every human being under the age of 18.

The underpinning rationale of this body of international legal norms is that children constitute a vulnerable category in need of special protection because of their physical and psychological immaturity<sup>46</sup>. Youth as an age category therefore positions itself across the boundaries of childhood and adulthood. The age cohort between 15 and 18 is sometimes also referred to as “adolescents”. However, this age categorisation is not universally accepted. UN agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>47</sup>, the United Nations’ Children Fund (UNICEF)<sup>48</sup>, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)<sup>49</sup> define adolescents as boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 19.

### *Youth as a social construct*

Many authors remark how the idea of a single, gender-equal age of maturity is a Western product. In many non-Western societies, this chronological cut-off point is an arbitrary concept. For example, in pre-colonial African societies, adulthood was reserved for men with relative wealth and social status, and a very small number of older women. Everybody else retained the status of minors, however old they were. With colonialism and mission education, the idea of an automatic transition based on age was introduced, although – according to some scholars – never fully accepted.<sup>50</sup> In the words of Alex De Waal:

*[T]he concept of youth is a Western concept and a political construct. ... Youth is a problematic, intermediary and ambivalent category, chiefly*

---

<sup>44</sup> United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 50/81 of 13 March 1996, “The World Programme of Action for Youth in the Year 2000 and Beyond”, A/RES/50/81.

<sup>45</sup> Coming into force in November 1999, the ACRWC is the first regional and international treaty on children’s rights.

<sup>46</sup> This is spelt out in the preamble of the CRC (“Bearing in mind that ... the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs *special safeguard and care*, including appropriate *legal protection*”<sup>46</sup>), emphasis added

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/OVERVIEW/AHD/adh\\_over.htm](http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/OVERVIEW/AHD/adh_over.htm)

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/> .

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.unfpa.org/adolescents/about.htm> UNFPA distinguishes between early adolescence (10-14) and late adolescence (15-19). Other working definitions adopted by UNFPA are: youth (15-24) and young people (10-24).

<sup>50</sup> De Waal (2002); Bayart (1993: 112).



*defined by what it is not: youth are not dependent children, nor are they independent, socially responsible adults.*<sup>51</sup>

To a large extent, youth is a sort of *transition territory* between the more established social categories of childhood and adulthood. Adding to which, there is considerable cross-cultural variation as to when an individual becomes an adult.

As a transition concept, youth is intrinsically linked with rites of passage of some kind. In most traditional societies, there are well defined rituals that mark this transition. In the case of West Africa, for example, Stephen Ellis has described the important role played by “secret societies” in the initiation of young boys and girls.<sup>52</sup> In contemporary societies, a number of symbolic steps can be identified, such as acquiring the rights to vote, getting married, obtaining a driving license, or buying alcohol.

Richard Curtain, one of the main theorists of the idea of youth as a transition phase, suggests that in most societies, the defining dimension of the transition to adulthood coincides with demonstrating the capacity to contribute to the economic welfare of the family. Curtain considers youth as a complex interplay of personal, institutional, and macroeconomic changes that most young people have to negotiate.<sup>53</sup>

### ***The gender dimension***

The transition from childhood to adulthood has a crucial gender dimension. How each gender experiences this transition stage and the societal expectations and personal aspirations young men and women may have for their futures begin to diverge. Youth is often the time when “the world expands for boys and contracts for girls”.<sup>54</sup> Girls begin to experience new restrictions and the attitudes, behaviour, conduct and, in particular, the sexuality of young women begins to be more closely watched, even “policed.”<sup>55</sup> As a consequence, cultural norms dictate that females are sheltered at the stage of puberty, for reasons such as purity and marriageability, stigma, or family reputation.

In many societies, young women end up with few “safe spaces” and narrow social networks. Few places exist where they can meet peers or form alliances and friendships because of their relegation to the private, domestic sphere.<sup>56</sup> In many parts of the world, adolescent girls’ enrolment in school often declines sharply due to the need for their

---

<sup>51</sup> De Waal (2002). The same applies to adolescence. A study carried out by the Women’s Commission for Refugees, Women and Children points out that “The English term adolescent, meaning a person in transition from puberty to adulthood, is based primarily on Western theories of child development that might not apply cross-culturally”.

<sup>52</sup> Ellis argues that the extreme violence of these ritualised acts is not incompatible with modernity – on the contrary, modern communication technology serves to strengthen and amplify the symbolic language. What happens in war is that ritualised violence slips out of control – in that it goes from the hands of the elders to the youth. Ellis (1999, 1995).

<sup>53</sup> World Youth Report (2003: 16).

<sup>54</sup> UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO (2003: 2).

<sup>55</sup> World Youth Report (2003)

<sup>56</sup> See Population Council, <http://www.popcouncil.org/ta/critic.html>

help at home or the fact that their education is considered less important than the education of their brothers or male peers. Finally, girls' lack of power or status can often lead to a limited ability to prevent unwanted sex or to negotiate safe sex practices.

There seems to be a perception that youth, as a status, is more relevant for boys than for girls. It is comparatively easier for girls to establish themselves as adult women when they become wives or mothers. A transition from boyhood to adulthood has different defining markers: often boys are left to "prove their manhood". In many societies, it is also socially and culturally acceptable for the stage of youth to be longer for young males than for young females, and for young males to be visible. During this time, young males are likely to gain much more autonomy and mobility than their female counterparts.

This difference in visibility is reflected widely in the literature. Generally speaking, while there is a vast literature on the violence perpetrated against women and girls, young women tend to disappear when it comes to theories on youth and violence, most likely because they are perceived of as less of a threat. As a result, the way in which young women negotiate the trials of youth, and their capacities and rationale for violence (and for peace) are under-studied.

## Youth and violent conflict

The literature that touches on youth and violent conflict focuses on analysing the reasons why young people join the fighting. It is often remarked that war would not be possible without youth – as combatants of any war, in any part of the world, are made up primarily by young people. Why is this the case? Do young people, by the mere fact of being young and energetic, tend towards violence? Therefore, is a large proportion of young people in society *per se*, a warning sign for trouble? Do young people fight for their own causes, or are they mobilised into war by others? Do young people fight to change the circumstances of their particular grievances – and if so, what are these grievances?

This section will look into these questions based on the main trends in the literature. However, it is worth pointing out from the very beginning that the single most glaring gap in the research is the lack of attention to, and thorough documentation of, the positive contributions of young people in society. This translates into an increasing *securitisation* of the issue of youth.<sup>57</sup> While it is often pointed out that youth should not be regarded as merely a negative force, this comment appears to be an add-on, or a sort of *a priori* disclaimer.

Most of the analyses on youth and violent conflict are produced by working backwards – i.e. by analysing the motivations of young people that are, or have been, fighting, and generalising these motivations as if they were applicable to the whole "youth cohort" in

---

<sup>57</sup> Rodgers (1999: 1). This securitisation of the issue of youth is not limited to the participation of youth in violent conflict. It is also very evident in the discourse on youth gangs. The author stresses the *negative perception* by society as key in the understanding of the phenomenon of youth gangs. Youth gangs are seen as violent and criminal *by nature*.

a particular context. But what about the majority of young people who do not fight? As Nicholas Argenti puts it, with specific reference to Africa:

*The remarkable thing is not why some of Africa's youth have embraced violence, but why so few of them have.*<sup>58</sup>

This is not meant to suggest that we should not try to reach a better understanding of the motivations of young combatants. However, we should also keep in mind that combatants are only a microcosm of the heterogeneous and multifaceted universe that, much for the sake of convenience, we call youth.

It is also important to remark that most of the literature is gender-biased. Although the necessity of incorporating a gender dimension is generally acknowledged, theories on youth and violence still implicitly or explicitly refer to young males. Literature on the victimhood of youth often focuses on young women, but it is the young males that are viewed as security risks and thus emblematic of the societal problems resulting from the youth crisis. Girls tend to disappear from the mainstream literature on youth and violent conflict, except when in the role of victims.

### ***Demography as an explanation for youth violence***

A first strand of research concentrates on demography. This thesis – of which Samuel Huntington is one of the main proponents – argues that “youth bulges” (i.e. an unusually high proportion of young people in the total population) lead to increasing insecurity and make such countries especially prone to conflict. It has been argued, for example, that the French revolution and the rise of Nazism can be linked, among other factors, to a percentage of young population above a certain critical level.<sup>59</sup>

This argument became particularly strong after September 11, 2001: youth bulges are now a popular explanation for the recruitment of young people into terrorist networks. Fareed Zakaria argues that:

*Youth bulges combined with small economic and social change provided the fundament for Islamic resurgence in the Arab world.*<sup>60</sup>

The literature on youth bulges considers migration to be a safety valve for youth discontent. Some authors go as far as saying that the possibility for Europe's youth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to emigrate to the United States, contributed significantly to limiting youth-generated violence in Europe in this period. Hence, Henrik Urdal argues that if

---

<sup>58</sup> Argenti (2000).

<sup>59</sup> For a comprehensive review of the youth bulges thesis, see Urdal (2004). Urdal's own conclusion is that there is no evidence of the claim made by Huntington that youth bulges above a certain critical level automatically make countries especially prone to conflict, but the combination of youth bulges and poor economic performance may be explosive.

<sup>60</sup> Zakaria (2001), quoted in Urdal (2004). The World Bank's work on the economics of conflict initially sustained the “youth bulge” argument. In its first version, the Collier-Hoeffler model found that large proportions of young males in a country increased the risk of conflict. Subsequent versions of the model, however, did not note a significant correlation.

migration opportunities are substantially restricted, this results in a higher risk of violent conflict.

One of the most extreme expressions of the demographic approach – and surely the most contested – is the thesis put forward by Robert Kaplan in 1994, as an integral part of his vision of a “coming anarchy”. Kaplan identifies an imminent security threat, directly connected to the presence of a large, unemployed and disaffected mass of youth, and selected West Africa to exemplify his apocalyptic vision, combining population explosion, resource depletion, and social decay:

*In cities in West African countries I saw ... young men everywhere – hordes of them. They were like loose molecules in a very unstable social fluid, a fluid that was clearly on the verge of igniting.*<sup>61</sup>

Youth in West Africa is seen by Kaplan as the sign of a retreat from modernity into a Hobbesian state of nature.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Coercion as an explanation for youth violence***

In the demographic approach, youth fight because, quite simply, they are too many. Other explanations focus on *coercion*. According to this thesis, young people fight because they are forced to – either by physical abduction, or because of a lack of other alternatives for survival. The corollary of this is that young people are not really responsible for their choice to fight, and should be treated as victims rather than as perpetrators.

This perspective is found especially in the burgeoning literature on child soldiers, produced largely by aid agencies and NGOs, and based, to a large extent, on witness accounts of former child soldiers.<sup>63</sup> These reports are relevant for this chapter, because, although focusing on under-age combatants, they also consider young people that are over 15 (usually, in the age range 15-18<sup>64</sup>).

The attention paid to child soldiers has translated into a powerful advocacy effort, leading to a number of concrete outcomes. These include the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which raises from 15 to 18 the minimum legal age for the involvement of children in combat;<sup>65</sup> the adoption by the United Nations Security Council of a number of resolutions on the protection of

---

<sup>61</sup> Kaplan (1994). On Kaplan, see also Clapham (2003).

<sup>62</sup> Olawale (2004: 4).

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Human Rights Watch reports on Liberia, Uganda, Angola, Burma, Colombia (Human Rights Watch, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2004).

<sup>64</sup> Although the CRC considers a “child” as anyone under the age of 18, it bans the recruitment and use of child soldiers until the age of 15.

<sup>65</sup> The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict entered into force on 12 February 2002, on that date becoming a binding instrument for States having ratified it.

children's rights,<sup>66</sup> and the inclusion of special provisions for child protection in the mandate of recently established peacekeeping missions.

Focusing on young people as victims, however, can also have the effect of diverting attention from other dimensions of the problem. It can promote the idea of youth in conflict as a "soft" humanitarian concern, detached from economic, social and political considerations and realities. As Angela McIntyre puts it:

*Horror stories of rape, abduction and systemic violence from the mouths of the children did serve their purpose – to mobilize and galvanize sentiments about the use of children as soldiers. But delivered by bewildered child-victims, far from home, to groups of policy makers and activists, they became irrational emotional appeals, stripped of their political meaning and ultimately alienating an important issue from broader discussions on human security.*<sup>67</sup>

In fact, new research reveals that there is an important element of volunteerism that should be more closely considered when looking at young combatants. Rachel Brett has observed that large numbers of young people volunteer for the armed forces, rather than being forced or coerced. She states that:

*[while] children rarely go looking for a war to fight... for adolescents, war is also an opportunity: for employment, to escape from an oppressive family situation or humiliation at school, for adventure, or to serve a cause.*<sup>68</sup>

In interviews conducted by Peters and Richards to understand why youth joined militias, many (under-18) respondents perceived themselves as adults by saying that they had for many years fended for themselves and had made adult decisions.<sup>69</sup>

However, "how voluntary is voluntary?"<sup>70</sup> Can we really speak about a "rational choice" in the absence of other concrete alternatives? Aren't young people often, in a way, forced into violence?

Whether or not young people (especially minors) can be rational actors, or have the rational maturity to understand the implications and underlying causes of their decisions, is a highly contested area. Indeed, such questions are extensively debated in the juvenile justice arena – the debate on the death penalty for under-age offenders in the United States provides a significant example. Among the literature produced by United Nations agencies, NGOs and organisations that advocate for the protection of children, there is a reluctance to see young fighters as having rationality in decision-making. As a study conducted by the organisation RAWOO points out:

---

<sup>66</sup> SC Resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001).

<sup>67</sup> McIntyre (2004: 4)

<sup>68</sup> Brett (2003: 2)

<sup>69</sup> RAWOO (2003)

<sup>70</sup> Brett (2003).

*Donors tend to be impressed by the victimhood of child soldiers... while the thinking of people directly affected by the war tends – understandably – to be dominated by thoughts of punishing the young fighters who have caused widespread suffering in society.*<sup>71</sup>

Determining the degree to which young people can be held accountable for their actions during war has important repercussions in the post-conflict phase. While recently there have been concerted efforts to mainstream child rights into UN peacekeeping missions, and to specifically address child soldiers in DDR programmes, the needs of youth are less understood. Part of this stems from a failure to recognise and address the variety of reasons for which young people fight.

### ***Youth crisis as an explanation for violence***

A third area of research concentrates on youth grievances. It criticises the demographic approach for concentrating primarily on quantitative aspects (ratio youth/total population) and not providing sufficient analysis of the motives behind youth violence.

In response, this strand of research attempts to analyse the reasons behind the involvement of youth in violent conflict by focusing on an underlying “youth crisis”.<sup>72</sup> Paul Richards’ analysis of the conflict in Sierra Leone is emblematic of this line of thought. In direct response to Kaplan’s vision, Richards argues that conflicts in West Africa are but the violent manifestations of a rational expression of a youth crisis. The bulk of Richards’ argument is that, although the manifestation of violence appears irrational, its reasons are fully rational. The appalling, and apparently senseless, terror that accompanied the war in Sierra Leone has to be interpreted as a calculated, rational stratagem, employed by youth fighters in order to unsettle the victim and maximise the chances for success.<sup>73</sup>

With regard to the cause of youth discontent, and hence youth violence, Richards argues that youth in Sierra Leone reacted to exclusionary neo-patrimonial practices and state decay in the form of armed rebellion. Far from being mindless or random, youth violence resulted from the alienation of young people because of failures in the educational system and a dearth of employment opportunities – it was “a plea for attention from those who felt they have been forgotten”.<sup>74</sup>

Richards analyses how the product of American youth culture (mainly action movies and rap music) were re-interpreted in local terms as symbolising and legitimising resistance against a repressive official structure. This became characteristic by the instrumental use of Rambo’s movie “First Blood” by rebel commanders to socialise children and teenagers into violence. According to Richards, the movie mirrored a crisis of social exclusion experienced by Sierra Leonean youth.

---

<sup>71</sup> RAWOO (2003).

<sup>72</sup> Peters and Richards (1998).

<sup>73</sup> Richards (1996).

<sup>74</sup> Keen (2003).

Authors like Ibrahim Abdullah and Yusuf Bandura<sup>75</sup> put a different spin on this issue in their analysis of the role of youth in the conflict in Sierra Leone. Their argument is based on the centrality of a subaltern, “lumpen” youth culture that is anti-social and anti-establishment in orientation – a youth “in search of a radical alternative”.<sup>76</sup> “Lumpens” are defined by the authors as “largely unemployed and unemployable youth, mostly male, who live by their wits [and] have one foot in what is generally referred to as the informal or the underground economy. They are prone to criminal behaviour, petty theft, drugs, drunkenness, and gross indiscipline”.<sup>77</sup>

To sum up, a “youth crisis” has often been used as an explanation for youth violence and the involvement of young people in violent conflict. Compared to approaches that focus solely on demography (youth fight because there are too many of them) or coercion (youth fight because they are forced to), this strand of research brings in a more complex and multifaceted dimension. However, as will be explored in the next paragraph, the concept of youth crisis is in itself problematic. Youth is in itself an awkward age, where identity is questioned and refined. Where do we draw the line between the normal teenage angst and “youth crisis” potentially leading to violence?

### Why is youth in crisis?

A cursory look at sociological studies on youth (however defined) carried out in different parts of the world reveal a bulk of surprisingly similar considerations. Youth as a category seem to be highly unsatisfied with their lives. They feel deprived of adequate education and employment opportunities. They barely identify, if at all, with the political thinking and behaviour of their parents.<sup>78</sup> They feel let down and marginalised by society. In short, they are in crisis. Or are they? Are they all in the “same” crisis? And if they are, does this crisis necessarily lead to violence? If young people who fight do so because they are in crisis (as Richards argues), what about those who do not fight? Are they not in crisis? Do they deal with crisis in a different way?

It is striking that the concept of *youth crisis* is often used but rarely explained. In very general terms, two different meanings of the expression “youth crisis” can be identified: (i) a societal crisis impacting on youth, resulting in a generally felt “uneasiness” in the face of societal changes and constraints; or (ii) a crisis originating from youth and impacting on society at large. It is not surprising that these two meanings are often used interchangeably or are confused.

Sub-Saharan Africa offers a telling example of youth increasingly seen as a *cause* of societal crisis. In the immediate post-independence period, African youth was seen in extremely positive terms, as the “hope” of the continent. The youth enjoyed cultural prestige as agents of transformation of African societies, and this translated into massive

---

<sup>75</sup> Bandura (1997).

<sup>76</sup> Abdullah (1998: 204)

<sup>77</sup> Abdullah (1998) Bandura (1997)

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, Martin Munoz (2000: 23) on the Arab World: “Arabism, Socialism and Anti-Imperialism were the values of the generation of heroic nationalist fighters, but they are not necessarily shared by the generation born after independence”. See also ICG (2003: 14) on Central Asia.

investments, especially in education – in the pursuit of the dream of “education for all”.<sup>79</sup> As pointed out by Ismail Olawale:

*Young people incarnated the future and represented the promises of restored identities, as opposed to colonial alienation and postcolonial forms of domination and subordination. As bearers of the twofold project of modernity and the return to the sources of African cultures, they were called upon to promote and respect the political and moral obligations of citizenship and of political, social and cultural responsibility, with a view to constructing African democracies.*<sup>80</sup>

While maintaining the frontier between elders and juniors, the post-independence nationalist project in Africa put youth at the centre of its plans for economic development and national liberation.

Young people were the greatest casualty of the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s, and the consequent adoption of structural adjustment reforms sponsored by the International Financial Institutions. Economic reforms required drastic cuts in public expenditures. Under pressure to reduce deficits and downsize the public sector, African states (and similarly, though to a lesser extent, other regions in the world)<sup>81</sup> were unable to keep the promises that were made to their youth. “Not only are young people losing the prestigious status that nationalism gave them in its ascending phase, but they no longer represent the national priority. This loss in status is reflected in the collapse of the institution of education. ... Excluded from the arenas of power, work, education, and leisure, young Africans construct places of socialisation and new sociabilities whose function is to show their difference, either on the margins of society or at its heart, simultaneously as victims and active agents, and circulating in a geography that escapes the limits of national territories.”<sup>82</sup> No longer seen as a hope, the youth turned into a source of despair and became a threat- a “lost generation” according to the definition of Donald Cruise O’Brien.<sup>83</sup>

It is important to remark that this change of perspective was largely exogenous to youth – having to do with the capacity of the State to respond to youth demands, rather than with a fundamental change in such demands. Interestingly enough, while there is ample documentation of the social effects of structural adjustment, the specific effects on youth remain largely unexplored.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Olawale (2004: 3). See also Diouf (2003: 3).

<sup>80</sup> Olawale (2004: 3).

<sup>81</sup> For the Arab region, see for example Martin Munoz (2000)

<sup>82</sup> See Diouf (2003: 4):

<sup>83</sup> Cruise O’ Brien (1996).

<sup>84</sup> Analysing youth crime and delinquency in Latin America, Benvenuti (2003) argues that “[I]nequality and impoverishment, further reinforced by neo-liberal macroeconomics policies adopted by many countries in the region, together with the incapacity of national states to address poverty and exclusion in the distribution of economic, political and social resources, account for the main reason for the proliferation of juvenile delinquency”. Emphasis added. However, the author also notes the scarcity of specific literature linking youth delinquency and inequality.



Yet, there is room for the argument that the economic crisis and the subsequent reforms not only had negative effects on the possibility for young people to fulfil their ambitions and respond to the expectations placed upon them, but, in fact, impaired their capacity for the transition “out of youth” and into adulthood. In the case of Cameroon, for example:

*Throughout most of Cameroon’s post-colonial history, the social integration of youths into the society was unproblematic. Biological and social development from childhood, through youth, to the achievement of adult status proceeded step by step. Though usually it is considered that the school-to-work transition is one of the prominent features of growing up, this transition is blurred in developing countries, where the early entry of the youth into the workforce engenders “adulthood” early into their lives. This situation changed after 1987, however, when the economic meltdown meant a shrinking of job opportunities for everyone. The problems were only exacerbated by Cameroon’s structural adjustment program (SAP) agreement with the World Bank in 1988. Intrinsic to this program was a commitment to reducing deficit spending and downsizing the state. Practically, this meant the freezing of employment opportunities in an economy where the State was the main employer. The SAP has ... marginalized youth or reduced their chances for sustainable livelihoods.<sup>85</sup>*

If the notion of youth can be seen, to a large extent, as corresponding to a transition from childhood to adulthood, then it can be argued that a youth crisis is a situation where this transition is blocked, and the perspectives for transition to full adult status are seen as shrinking. Youth becomes “stretched out” if the economic and social statuses required for adulthood are unattainable for young adults. There is increasing evidence from different parts of the world that full adulthood is more and more difficult to achieve, due to social and economic constraints. With particular reference to Africa, Charlotte Spinks remarks that

*For many young Africans, “youth” is not serving as a transitional phase to a more established social status, but is an enduring limbo. This is a source of tremendous frustration. Instead of leaving youth behind and entering adulthood by marrying and establishing independent households, an increasing proportion of this “lost generation” ... are unable to attain any social status.<sup>86</sup>*

This underpins the sense of exclusion and marginalisation from society. Two major factors of this impaired transition are the lack of education and the lack of employment opportunities. Going to school and finding a job are often cited as the key priorities by young people in the developing world. At the same time, a lack of education and unemployment (for both the educated and the uneducated) appear at the top of the list of

---

<sup>85</sup> Jua (2003).

<sup>86</sup> Spinks (2002: 193).

youth grievances, and are singled out by most scholars focusing on youth crisis. These two elements therefore deserve particular attention.

### *Education*

As seen above, the decade of the 1980s meant, in Africa and elsewhere, the death of the dream of education for all. Since then, education in most parts of the world has become a highly valued, scarce commodity – and its unequal distribution has emerged as a source of friction among groups.<sup>87</sup>

This scarcity of opportunities impacts youth at all levels of education. Emphasis, by governments and international actors alike, is normally placed on primary education (for example, in the campaign for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals) – and indeed, a lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills prevents young people from entering the labour market (and therefore establishing themselves as fully independent adults) and from developing the capacity to resist political manipulation. However, the emphasis on primary education should not diminish the focus on higher education opportunities (or lack thereof) when discussing youth. In particular, admission to University can be a factor of violent competition, as shown, for example, in the case of Sri Lanka. An element that has embittered Sinhalese-Tamil relations relates to the procedure of selecting students for University admission (known as “standardisation”<sup>88</sup>). It has been claimed that discrimination in this area provided the main impulse for the emergence of militant movements among Tamil youth in the North during the 1970s.

At the same time, while the question of *availability* of education is crucial, this should not lead us to overlook other dimensions that are equally important – namely: what kind of education is provided? Does education propose an egalitarian model or simply replicate the inequalities of society? What are the contents of education, its curricula and methods? How does it socialise (or de-socialise) youth? As shown in many cases around the world, school segregation on racial, religious, linguistic or other grounds can be a factor in furthering group isolation and exacerbating tensions in society.<sup>89</sup> School curricula and textbooks are powerful means of mobilisation and indoctrination.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> There are numerous examples of education being used to advance the interest of one social group at the expense of others, as happened when the Serbian authorities reduced the number of places in secondary schools reserved for Albanians in Kosovo. Bush/Santarelli (2000: 9).

<sup>88</sup> For more on the standardisation policy and its effects on the conflict in Sri Lanka, see Peiris (21).

<sup>89</sup> In South Africa, the practice of segregating education was both a reflection of, and a contribution to, the repressive apartheid system. For more on the South African case, see Graham-Brown (1991), Bush/Santarelli (2000: 13), Ntshoe (1999), Brecht/Spocht (2004: 16).

<sup>90</sup> In the case of Sri Lanka, Sinhalese textbooks used in segregated schools in the 1970s and 1980s were scattered with images of Tamils as the historical enemies of the Sinhalese and Sinhalese Buddhists as the only true Sri Lankans. In many parts of the world, historic textbooks are acquiring an increasing militaristic nature, with a relative neglect of the gains made by civilization in peacetime. See Bush/Santarelli (2000).

Schools provide fertile ground for mobilisation and recruitment, as they combine the hierarchical teacher/student relationship with peer-group pressure.<sup>91</sup>

Another key set of questions is related to the *relevance* of education. How does the school system connect to society? How does it prepare young people for employment and self-sufficiency? Does it raise expectations that cannot then be met?

Again, there is disturbing evidence from most parts of the developing world that the formal school system is not providing relevant education.<sup>92</sup> The African education system has been accused of being a perpetual waste of human resources, without providing students with relevant skills and knowledge, and instead promoting a “*desapprentissage de la vie*”.<sup>93</sup> In particular, the university system appears to many as being disconnected from the real world, perpetuating a detachment to what is needed. Their pedagogical methods do not lead to critical thinking, as they are mainly based on “memorising”, with little or no active contribution from the student in the learning process.

In short, education in most of the developing world is a scarce commodity, and competition for it – along with discriminatory practices and curricula within it – can foster tensions in society.<sup>94</sup> In addition, public education – even when it is available – is not necessarily connected to reality and does not always prepare young people to better deal with the challenges of the “real world”.

### *Unemployment*

Closely connected to the issue of education is another major concern in young people lives: getting a job with a living wage. As education is largely failing to provide students with an avenue towards a better future, young people increasingly regard education as irrelevant or useless. This feeling is poignantly summarised in the words of a young combatant from Congo Brazzaville:

*Education does not lead to employment, so why bother? The State no longer recruits – you have a Ph.D. and you are a taxi man!*<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Brett/Specht (2004: 126).

<sup>92</sup> Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, more attention began to be paid to the danger of using school curricula for passing Islamic fundamentalist messages. Pakistan’s education system came under increasing scrutiny after 9/11, particularly with reference to the *madrassas*. In response, President Musharaf initiated a reform of the education system in order to make it more “secular”. However, this reform has not addressed the key root cause of the *madrassas* boom – i.e. the failure of the formal school system to provide relevant education. In addition to financial constraints, the public school system offers outdated and irrelevant syllabi and is heavily corrupted. See ICG (2004).

<sup>93</sup> Mbembe (1985).

<sup>94</sup> As noted by Benvenuti (2003) in her study of youth gangs in Latin America: “Education, which should represent the best instrument for providing low-income youth with better opportunities, is now in danger of reinforcing existing inequalities. At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, access to quality education in the Latin American region still seems to be the privilege of the more wealthy classes”.

<sup>95</sup> Quoted in Brett/Specht (2004: 21).

The problem is not only linked to the availability, quality and relevance of education, but also more broadly to the economic and social constraints in which most developing countries find themselves. In many parts of the world, insufficient opportunities exist for young people to earn a living. According to ILO estimates, sixty-six million young people are unemployed, and a much higher number are under-employed. Worldwide, the unemployment rate for young people (aged 15-24) is up to three times higher than for adults.<sup>96</sup> A growing number of young people – from University graduates to illiterate youth – seem to be excluded from being able to gain access to waged employment, and hence to the full status of adults. Again from the case of Cameroon:

*For the youth, unemployment signalled a confirmation of their status as the lost generation, despite the rhetorical flourish in official discourse that refers to them as the “leaders of tomorrow”. Relegating them to this status deprives them of any alternatives in the present, prompting them to defer all their aspirations at this transitional phase in their lives to the period where they will attain maturity.<sup>97</sup>*

In Sri Lanka, for example, the rate of unemployment is higher among youth, and increases with the level of education. Educated young people have been increasingly vulnerable to a failure to obtain the type of employment considered commensurate to their qualifications, and there has been intensifying competition among aspirants for such employment. This led to a trend of increasing favouritism based upon criteria such as ethnicity, social class and personal links. Political patronage emerged as the main determinant of selection of new appointees, and the educated rural youth from the lower economic strata, regardless of ethnicity, are invariably the main victims of deprivation.<sup>98</sup> It is from this segment of society that both the Tamil Tigers and the Sinhalese People’s Liberation Front (JVP) draw their cadres.<sup>99</sup>

### ***Youth participation and decision-making***

In most parts of the world, political participation is not providing a channel for the youth to express their needs, aspirations and grievances. Despite the fact that young people may often be key figures in political movements (for example, revolutionary politics throughout Latin America relied on student activity, and student movements in Europe and the United States in the 1960s transformed the character of civil rights and societal structures), youth leadership rarely translates itself into the “adult” sphere of legislative or executive decision making.

---

<sup>96</sup> See <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/yen/index.htm> This is not limited to developing countries. In analysing the upsurge of youth delinquency in the United States, Freeman (1996) argues that the collapse of the job market has strongly contributed to young men’s participation in criminal activities. Quoted in Benvenuti (2003: 10).

<sup>97</sup> Jua (2003).

<sup>98</sup> Peiris (2001: 20).

<sup>99</sup> Peiris (2001: 21).

Over the last decade, the declining level of political engagement of youth has been causing concern for decision-makers worldwide. The idea of promoting “youth participation” has become popular in the discourse of Western governments and international organisations. The causes of this scarce involvement are generally traced back to a lack of interest on the part of young people. As a consequence, political institutions are often called upon to be more “youth friendly”, less bureaucratic, to “speak the language of the youth”.<sup>100</sup>

However, it is highly questionable that this approach addresses the main, or even a significant, barrier to youth participation in decision making. It can instead be argued that the formal political system is increasingly regarded by young people not so much as “boring” but rather as irrelevant, or inaccessible, or both things at the same time. Several authors criticise the current wave of enthusiasm for youth participation as failing to recognise the significant obstacles that young people currently experience when trying to participate socially, economically and politically.<sup>101</sup>

In recent years, a favoured response by national and international agencies alike has been support to the creation or development of “youth councils” or “youth forums”. Taking many forms, they usually describe groups of young people who come together in committees to discuss issues relating to their communities. However, there is increasing evidence that youth forums are often an inappropriate way of engaging many young people. As pointed out by Hugh Matthews, adults establish many youth forums largely because they are perceived to provide tangible opportunities deemed to enable ongoing participation rather than because of demand from young people themselves. Based on the experience in Great Britain, the author suggests that many youth forums are flawed participatory devices, often obfuscating the voices of many young people in decision making.<sup>102</sup>

Youth forums are not necessarily representative, they can be instrumentalised for purposes that have little or nothing to do with youth needs and aspirations.<sup>103</sup> They can be gender-biased, especially because girls might feel more “represented” by women’s organisations. Often, youth forums are not connected to decision-making in any significant way, so that they can result in frustrating “talk shows” with little concrete results. Participants to most youth forums around the world have already an age (mid- to late-twenties, or even early thirties) that would allow them to participate in formal

---

<sup>100</sup> On the lack of youth participation in formal politics and decision-making in Britain, see for example Kimberlee, R. (2002) and O’Toole (2003). O’toole argues that our understanding of the decline in youth participation is limited because much of the research on youth politics is based on a narrow conception of “the political”, where little attempt is made to explore how young people themselves define politics.

<sup>101</sup> This is argued, for example, by Bessant (2004) in the case of Australia.

<sup>102</sup> See Matthews/Limb (2003), Matthews, (2001a,b)

<sup>103</sup> This is remarked, for example, by the International Crisis Group in the case of Central Asia: “The youth organisations that have grown up, such as Kamolot in Uzbekistan, are dominated by older officials with little understanding of the real needs or aspirations of youth. Teaching young people to ‘behave’ or ‘conform’ is seen as much more important than supporting their aspirations and addressing their problems. Youth organisations are also plagued with corruption. Abusing their authority, officials manipulate funds for private interests.” ICG (2003c: 14)

structures. Focusing on promoting youth forums can shift the attention away from the real barriers that impede formal political participation.

More fundamentally, there are conceptual problems with the idea of a youth forum. Proponents of this form of participation assume, either explicitly or implicitly, the existence of a “youth agenda” – i.e. an agenda promoting the views, interests, aspirations and grievances of youth as a category. Youth forums, in this perspective, assume a twofold function – they serve to negotiate such a common agenda, and they are a lobbying platform to present such an agenda to “real” decision makers. This reflects the notion of youth as a homogenous category, which, as explored in the first section of this chapter, is largely an ideal rather than a reality.

The emphasis of the international community on youth participation has been particularly strong in post-conflict settings. Peace processes appear as a window of opportunity for promoting a higher degree of participation of youth. A first, basic reason for this is that young people acquire a status through conflict, and if they are defrauded of this status when peace returns, they can turn into “spoilers”. In South Africa, for example, youth were central to the anti-apartheid struggle (as recognised by the lowering of the voting age from 18 to 14 in the 1994 elections), but once the armed struggle subsided and talks began, they were instructed to stand-down and return to more normal pursuits for their age group, and leave older leaders, returning from prison and exile, to political negotiation. While this was in part a recognition by the leaders of the youth’s special needs (particularly education), young people felt cheated. In the long run, this marginalisation of youth during the peace process has arguably translated into the development of criminal gangs and other violent youth behaviour.<sup>104</sup>

The need to avoid turning young people into spoilers is not the only reason to involve them in political processes. Young people can play the role of bridge-builders and a youth capacity for peace during post-conflict situations does exist, as is evidenced in Kosovo, Palestine, Northern Ireland and South Africa. However, little documentation exists, and little attention is accorded to this area of study in the literature.<sup>105</sup>

### ***Youth crisis and HIV/AIDS***

The HIV/AIDS pandemic, in Africa and in other parts of the developing world, is likely to have a major effect on the dynamics of “crisis” outlined above, and on youth in general.

HIV/AIDS affects young people *directly*, as they are the most sexually active category in society, and therefore most likely to get infected. Young girls are particularly vulnerable, both for biological and social reasons. In Africa, in particular, the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to be surrounded by mystery, superstition and misconception, all factors that greatly increase the chances of young people to contract

---

<sup>104</sup> McEvoy-Levy (2001: 13).

<sup>105</sup> McEvoy-Levy (2001).

the disease. In addition, means of protection are often unavailable or too expensive, and the stigma connected with buying condoms is still very strong in many societies.<sup>106</sup>

Equally important (and far less addressed) is the *indirect* effect that HIV/AIDS is going to have on young people, particularly in Africa, in the coming decades. If the present trend for HIV/AIDS continues, the effects on inter-generational relations will be enormous. As the caretaker generation is affected, families and communities break apart; and surviving young people face an uncertain future. Already, in many countries in Africa, a new generation of HIV/AIDS orphans is emerging – children who will grow up without family support networks, and who risk becoming marginalised and violent youth. HIV/AIDS induces a crisis in the educational system and a disruption of governance and societal networks, by which young people are going to be particularly affected. Decreased adult life expectancy also has important adverse effects upon capital accumulation, skills acquisition, institutional functioning and memory. HIV/AIDS is much more than a public health issue – it is a social and security issue as well.<sup>107</sup>

With the exception of the work conducted by Alex De Waal, there has been a notable lack of systematic attention to the implication of HIV/AIDS for youth. According to De Waal, the “irresponsive behaviour” of young Africans towards the disease has to do with the profound uncertainty of their life prospects:

*They simply have no life plans, and little expectations that they will be able to achieve the goals of a good education, a well-paid job, a stable family, etc. If many of Africa’s youth see themselves as excluded, undervalued and doomed, what incentives do they have to avoid risky sexual activities?*<sup>108</sup>

The lack of education opportunities and unemployment decreases the chance of establishing safe sex practices and preventing the further spread of HIV/AIDS among young people. At the same time, education and employment are negatively affected by the spread of HIV/AIDS. Breaking this vicious circle should lay at the heart of strategies and programmes on youth in Africa.

## Non-violent responses to crisis?

Most young people around the world are finding their future prospects are shrinking, and experiencing a delay in their transition to adulthood. Lack of education and unemployment are the major symptoms, and at the same time reinforcing causes, of this crisis. The alienation from the formal decision-making system – increasingly perceived

---

<sup>106</sup> De Waal (2002: 176): “Most sexual activity and most HIV infection arise from adolescents exploring their sexuality ... Changing the high-risk sexual behaviour and practices of young people – both girls and boys – is perhaps the most important challenge in overcoming the HIV/AIDS pandemic”.

See [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_22232.htm](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_22232.htm)

<sup>107</sup> ICG (2001; 2004b). The nature of HIV/AIDS as a threat to security was recognized by the UN Security Council in its unprecedented resolution 1308 (2000).

<sup>108</sup> De Waal (2002: 183).

as inaccessible and irrelevant – prevents these grievances to be channelled through mainstream political avenues. This is further compounded, in most parts of the world, by the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

How do youth respond to this crisis? Authors like Paul Richards, Ibrahim Abdullah, Yusuf Bandura, or Stephen Ellis all argue, in different ways, that youth are involved in violent conflict as a response to youth crisis. This should not, however, lead us to argue that involvement in violent conflict is the only - or even the main - response to youth crisis. Responses to youth crisis are not necessarily violent.

Here, we concentrate on analysing some of the non-violent (or non necessarily violent per se) responses to youth crisis – namely, urbanisation, South-North migration, and involvement in religious movements.

### *Youth, urbanisation and migration*

Young people today experience an exposure to the world that is unprecedented in past generations. The forces of globalisation and economic, social and political changes impact the way in which youth is experienced and perceived, and in turn affect the capacity of young people to negotiate shifting identities in their transition to adulthood. While many young people around the world perceive globalisation as an opportunity, many others feel marginalised and alienated.

The communication age puts young people in non-Western countries in unprecedented contact with Western culture. Television, tourists and returning migrants bring powerful images of another world. Whether such images are distorted or accurate, they can lead young people to rethink their own culture in light of this new information. This can lead to the questioning of one's identity, or the reaffirmation of one's separateness from the "other" – or, as it is often the case, some kind of combination of the two.<sup>109</sup> Youth cultures are becoming more and more global, but, at the same time, they assume very different forms depending on the local context. In this process of "domestication", external cultures and foreign models are re-interpreted according to the specific local concerns of the youth.<sup>110</sup>

These identity shifts and the "search for the other" are part of, and influence, two processes that are rapidly shaping the demography of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – namely, South-North migration and urbanisation. 15-29 year olds appear as the group most likely to migrate for employment purposes (legally or illegally), and they comprise the bulk of the urbanisation trend.<sup>111</sup> However, prospects (in the new countries or in the big cities) are often grimmer than what might have been anticipated, or glimpsed on TV. In addition, transitions are difficult in themselves, and the difficulty of finding employment in already over-stretched cities or as another member of growing immigrant communities can lead to alienation and discontent. Increasingly restrictive

---

<sup>109</sup> See Bennani-Chraïbi (2000), on youth in Morocco.

<sup>110</sup> On this contamination between global and local (often referred to as glocalisation), with particular reference to youth cultures, see Comaroff (2000).

<sup>111</sup> Blair Ruble et al. (2003).



immigration policies in Western Europe and North America have led to frustration. For a significant portion of youth in the developing world, the West is a metaphor for liberation,<sup>112</sup> as well as a window of opportunity for the “entrance into adulthood” that would otherwise be precluded by economic and social constraints. As noted in the case of Cameroon:

*In the wake of the economic crisis in Cameroon and the disappearance of transitional pathways for youth that accompanied it, political and economic uncertainty turned into a new kind of social certainty for youth ... they opted for migration to the West, seen as a ‘final port of call’.*<sup>113</sup>

For rural youth, urbanisation serves a similar purpose. Young people migrate to the city from rural areas for a myriad of reasons – including the search for economic opportunity, boredom with traditional rural life, or to escape community disruption due to violent conflict. Once in the cities, however, they find little outlet for their talents and energy.

It is estimated that 60% of the world population will live in cities by 2030, and that as many as 60% of urban residents will be under 18.<sup>114</sup> Nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than in Africa. Even in a world that is increasingly urbanising, the rise of Africa’s cities is dazzling. Statistics show that young men predominate among urban migrants in Africa, although the number of female youth in cities is also increasing. In addition to voluntary migrants from rural areas, young IDPs or refugees often flee to the city instead of being confined to camps, and are often unaccounted in formal statistics.

Youth urban migration in Africa is widely regarded as overwhelmingly negative, leading to unemployment, crime, unrest, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Urban Africa is regularly depicted as dangerous and veering out of control, as a kind of Darwinian universe where only the fittest survive. Urban youth in Africa feel marginalised and alienated from mainstream society – which is ironic, considering that they *are* numerically dominant in a predominantly young and rapidly urbanising continent. They are a “majority feeling like a minority”. The positive contributions of urban youth are not appreciated – a glaring gap since “the wealth of youthful residents constitutes a largely untapped resource for ingenuity, stability and economic growth”.<sup>115</sup>

As Marc Sommers argues in his study of urban youth in Africa,<sup>116</sup> policy makers would be wise to focus on this group, both because it could pose a security risk, and for their potential as peace-builders. Supporting the integration of young people is a challenge necessary for the health of societies, not only as a preventive measure against crime and

---

<sup>112</sup> In a UNDP survey on youth in the Arab World, almost half of the interviewed youth expressed the desire to emigrate, resulting from concerns over job opportunities and education. See UNDP (2002), quoted in Urdal (2004: 17).

<sup>113</sup> Jua (2003).

<sup>114</sup> Ruble et al (2003).

<sup>115</sup> Sommers (2003a).

<sup>116</sup> See Sommers (2001; 2003a, b)

violence, but also because channelling the vitality of young people in positive directions can lead to outcomes that are beneficial to the whole of society.

### *Youth crisis and religious movements*

Participation of young people in religious movements appears as an increasingly prominent phenomenon in different parts of the world. Worldwide, two powerful forces of youth mobilisation have emerged in recent years – Islam and Christian Pentecostalism. In spite of their outward differences, they perform similar functions in societies, providing youth with security, moral guidance, as well as education, employment contacts, friendship and alliance networks – in essence, forming the foundation for the survival strategies for increasing numbers of young people as they move away from their families and communities.

It is particularly interesting to notice that some tendencies in Islam (for example, the Hizb ut-Tahrir movement in Central Asia) propose programmes targeting exactly the kind of youth grievances that we have discussed so far – in particular education and employment. Utopian as they might seem, these programmes address issues that are at the core of youth struggles – and thus appeal to young people.<sup>117</sup>

New Christian groups are equally successful in attracting young people. The founders of most African Pentecostal movements tend to be women and young men, who have fewer stakes in the social order and are thus willing to challenge social and cultural structures. The success of Pentecostalism among African youth derives from a combination of “push” and “pull” factors. It is a dual response to the perceived irrelevance and disinterest of the state in meeting youth needs. But also, the Pentecostal rejection of the status quo can appeal to youth aspirations. In societies traditionally dominated by elders, Pentecostalism offers young people power and responsibility. It provides a network of support for young people at a time where extended family support has been fractured by mobility and change. It offers a “social space” where members find psychological security and solidarity. To a large extent, religion seems to be a youth response to a deepening gap between their expectations and the opportunities open to them.

Explanations offered by the literature on the participation of young people in religious movements resonate closely with those identified for the involvement of youth in violence of various forms.<sup>118</sup> However, little or no analysis exists that jointly analyses these two phenomena and the role of religious participation as an alternative to violence.

---

<sup>117</sup> Spinks (2002:197)

<sup>118</sup> See for example Benvenuti (2003: 22), on youth gangs: “Gangs represent an attempt by young people to reconstruct their identities, and to rebel against institutions (such as the family, school and even the labour market) that have been damaged by chronic inequality and exclusion. ... They present alternative sources of income, and a means of reconstructing that sense of security, belonging, recognition, and participation that society seems so categorically to deny them”.

## Conclusions

The chapter has tried to deconstruct and question the “youth crisis leads to violence” paradigm. It has argued that the concept of “youth crisis” should be treated with caution. Youth in itself is a problematic category, one that does not automatically adhere together; it is more a convenient label on a multifaceted reality. Therefore, applying a unifying notion of “youth crisis” is misleading.

The objective here is not to offer an over-encompassing explanation of youth crisis, but rather to warn against the simplistic use of this term. Some authors stress how a general economic and social crisis in many parts of the world is impacting youth in a particularly severe way, by impairing their capacity to negotiate their transition into adulthood. If as many say, youth is pre-eminently a transition territory, what happens when this transition is “blocked” by economic and social constraints? Is the so-called “crisis of youth” in fact the impossibility of “getting out” of youth and into adulthood? Are young people “stuck” in youth and if so, what does this mean for their society?

Young people in most of the developing world are increasingly deprived of education and employment opportunities – and hence of the possibility of establishing themselves as adults and caretakers in an increasingly competitive world. They are not involved in decision-making and see mainstream political channels as inaccessible or irrelevant. If the present trends remain, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is bound to make things worse by eroding human resources and already weak social infrastructures. While their prospects get bleaker, youth are exposed in an unprecedented way to the glamour of the “other” – the big cities, the Western world.

Responses to this are specific to each person and have psychological as well as social dimensions. In very broad terms, we can say that responses can be violent or non-violent. Violent responses are clearly not limited to involvement in violent conflict but encompass a wide range of forms – including terrorism, gangs, criminality, random violence, vandalism, self-destructive violence, and domestic violence. Among non-violent responses, this chapter concentrated on urbanisation, migration, and religious participation – which all represent responses to a lack of status, ways to renegotiate the youth passage to adulthood, a “search for the other” in a physical or spiritual sense.

The literature on these phenomena usually suffers from the same bias as the literature on youth and violent conflict – by starting from the phenomenon under consideration and working “backwards”. By doing so, the different strands of literature arrive to very similar considerations regarding the causes (lack of education, unemployment, lack of political participation, unequal benefits and alienating effects of globalisation). What seems to be lacking, however, is a lack of holistic reflection that puts youth, in all its complexity, at the centre.

## Bibliography

- Abdullah, I (1998), "Bush Path to Destruction: The Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36, 2.
- Argenti, N. (2002), "Youth in Africa: A Major Resource for Change", in De Waal/Argenti (eds.), *Young Africa: Realising the Rights of Children and Youth*, Africa World Press.
- [Aning/McIntyre \(2004\), "From Youth to Rebellion to Abduction: The Anatomy of Recruitment in Sierra Leone", in McIntyre \(ed.\), \*Invisible Stakeholders: the Impact of Children on War\*, Institute of Security Studies.](#)
- Badsha, O., Maxted, J. & Tillim, G. (2002), *Amulets & Dreams : War, Youth & Change in Africa*, Pretoria: South African History Online.
- Baker, B. (2002), "When the Bakassi Boys Came: Eastern Nigeria Confronts Vigilantism", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 20, 2.
- Bangura, Y. (1997), "Understanding the Political and Cultural Dynamics of the Sierra Leone War: A Critique of Paul Richards' Fighting for the Rain Forest", *Africa and Development*, XXII, 3/ 4.
- Barber, B.K. (2001), "Political violence, social integration & youth functioning: Palestinian youth from the Intifada", *Journal of Community Psychology* 29,3.
- Barber, B.K. (2003), *Heart and Stones: Palestinian Youth from the Intifada*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Barber, B.K. (2003), "Youth and Political Violence", *Advances in Applied Developmental Psychology*, 20.
- Barber, B.K. (2002), "Politics, Politics, and More Politics: Youth Life Experience in the Gaza Strip", in Bowen/Early (Eds.), *Everyday life in the Muslim Middle East*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Benni-Chraïbi (2000), "Youth in Morocco: An Indicator of a Changing Society", in Meijer, R. (Ed.), *Alienation or Integration of Arab Youth – Between Family, State, and Street*, Richmond: Curzon Press.
- Benvenuti, P. (2003), *Youth Violence and Delinquency in the Latin America Region*, Thesis, London School of Economics.
- Bessant, J. (2004), "Mixed Messages: Youth Participation and Democratic Practice", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 39, 2.
- Bessant, J. (2003), "Youth participation: a new mode of government", *Policy Studies*, 24, 2/3.
- Brett/ Sprecht (2004), *Young Soldiers: Why They Choose to Fight*, Lynne Rienner: Boulder, Colorado.
- Brett, R. (2003), *Why do adolescents volunteer for armed forces or armed groups?*, Paper presented at the Spanish Red Cross Conference, Valencia, Spain, November 5 – 7.
- Brett, R. (2002), *Girl Soldiers: Challenging the Assumptions*, Paper for Quaker United Nations Office.
- Bridges-Palmes (2002), "Providing Education for Young Africans" in DeWaal/Argenti (Eds.), *Young Africa: Realising the Rights of Children and Youth*, Africa World Press.
- Chabal/Daloz, (1999), *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, James Currey, Oxford and Indiana University Press, Indiana.
- Clapham, C., (2003), *Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Internal Conflict*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', Working Paper Series, July.

- Clapham, C., (1998, ed.), *Africa Guerrillas*, Oxford: James Currey.
- Cruise O'Brien, D. (1996), "A lost generation: Youth Identity and State Decay in West Africa", in R. Webner and Ranger, *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, London: Zed Books.
- De Boec/Honwana (2000), "Faire et Défaire la Société: Enfants, Jeunes et Politique en Afrique", *Politique Africaine*, 80.
- De Waal, A., (2002a), "Realising Child Rights in Africa: Children, Young People and Leadership", in De Waal/Argenti, *Young Africa: Realising the Rights of Children and Youth*, Africa World Press.
- De Waal, A., (2002b), "HIV/AIDS and Young Africans", in De Waal/Argenti, *Young Africa: Realising the Rights of Children and Youth*, Africa World Press.
- De Waal, A., (2003), "How Will HIV/AIDS Transform African Governance", *African Affairs*, 102.
- De Waal/Argenti, eds. (2002), *Young Africa: Realising the Rights of Children and Youth*, Africa World Press.
- Diouf, M. (1996), "Urban Youth and Senegalese Politics: Dakar 1988- 1994", *Public Culture*, 8.
- El Kenz, A. (1995), "Les jeunes et la violence" in Ellis, S. (Ed.) *L'Afrique Maintenant*, Paris: Khartala.
- Ellis, S. (1999), *The Mask of Anarchy*, London: Hurst.
- Ellis, S. (1995), "Liberia 1989- 1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence", *African Affairs*, 94, 375.
- Freeman, R.B. (1996), "Why Do So Many Young American Men Commit Crimes and What Might We Do About it?", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 10, 1.
- Fronk/Hungtinton/Chadwick (1999), "Educational Attitudes and Trends in Palestine", *Educational Studies*, 25, 2
- Harris, D. (1999), "From 'Warlord' to 'Democratic' President: How Charles Taylor Won the 1997 Liberian Elections", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 3.
- Hendrixson, A. (2004), "Angry Young Men, Veiled Young Women: Constructing a New Population Threat", Corner House Briefing 34
- Henry (2002), "Refugies sierra-leonais et aide humanitaire en Guinee – la reinvention d'une citoyennete de frontiere", *Politique Africaine*, 85.
- Honwana, A. (2000), "Innocents et Coupables: Les Enfants Soldats Comme Acteurs Tactiques", *Politique Africaine*, 80.
- Human Rights Watch (2002), *Burma, "My Gun Was as Tall as Me" Child Soldiers in Burma*.
- Human Rights Watch (2003a), *Colombia "You'll Learn Not to Cry": Child Combatants in Colombia*.
- Human Rights Watch (2003b), *Angola, "Forgotten Fighters: Child Soldiers in Angola"*.
- Human Rights Watch (2003c), *Uganda Stolen Children: Abduction and Recruitment in Northern Uganda*.
- Human Rights Watch (2004), *Liberia, "How to Fight, How to Kill: Child Soldiers in Liberia"*
- International Crisis Group (2004a), *Cote D'Ivoire: No Peace in Sight*, ICG Africa Report, 82.
- International Crisis Group (2004b), *HIV/AIDS as a Security Issue in Africa: Lessons from Uganda*, Issues Report, 3.
- International Crisis Group (2004c), *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, Africa Report, 87.

- International Crisis Group (2004d), *Rebuilding Liberia: Prospects and Perils*, Africa Report, 75.
- International Crisis Group (2004e), *Pakistan: Reforming the Education Sector*, Asia Report, 84.
- International Crisis Group (2003a), *Liberia: Security Challenges*, Africa Report, 71.
- International Crisis Group (2003b), *Guinea: Uncertainties at the End of an Era*, Africa Report, 74.
- International Crisis Group (2003c), *Youth in Central Asia: Losing the New Generation*, Asia Report, 66.
- International Crisis Group (2001), *HIV/AIDS as a Security Issues*, Issue Report.
- Jua, N. (2003), "Differential Responses to Disappearing Transitional Pathways: Redefining Possibility among Cameroonian Youths", *African Studies Review*.
- Kanji, N. (1990), "War and Children in Mozambique: Is International Aid Strengthening or Eroding Community Based Policies?", *Community Development Journal*, 25, 2.
- Keen, D. (2003) Greedy elites, dwindling resources, alienated youths: the anatomy of protracted violence in Sierra Leone. In: *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, 2.
- Kimberlee, R. (2002), "Why Don't British Young People Vote at General Elections?", *Journal of Youth Studies*, 5, 1.
- Konate, Y., "Les Enfants de la Balle – De la Fesci au Movement de Patriotes", *Politique Africaine*, 89.
- Kurimoto/Simonse (1998) *Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa : Age Systems in Transition*, Oxford: James Currey.
- Leao, A. (2004), "A Luta Continua: Children and Youth in Mozambique's Struggles", in McIntyre (ed.), *Invisible Stakeholders: the Impact of Children on War*, Pretoria: Institute of Security Studies.
- Machel, G. (2001) "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: Report of the Expert of the Secretary General, Ms Graca Machel," UN Doc, A/51/306, New York.
- Matthews/Limb (2003), "Another white elephant? Youth councils as democratic structures", *Space and Polity*, 7, 2.
- Matthews, H. (2001a), "Participatory Structures and the Youth of Today: Engaging Those Who Are Hardest to Reach", *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 4, 2.
- Matthews, H. (2001b), "Citizenship, Youth Councils and Young People's Participation", *Journal of Youth Studies*, 4, 3.
- Marks, S. (2001), *Young Warriors: Youth Politics, Identity and Violence in South Africa*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg.
- Martinez, L. (2000), "Youth, the Street and Violence in Algeria", in Meijer, R. (ed.), *Alienation or Integration of Arab Youth – Between Family, State, and Street*, Richmond: Curzon Press.
- Mbembe, A. (1985), *Les Jeunes et l'Ordre Politique en Afrique*, Paris: L'Harmattan
- Mcevoy-Levy, S. (2001) "Youth as Social and Political Agents: Issues in Post-settlement Peace-building," *Kroc Institute Occasional Paper*, 21, 2, Notre Dame University
- Mcintyre, A. (2002), "Reinventing Peace: Challenges for a young continent", *African Security Review*, 11, 3.
- Mcintyre/ Aning, / Addo (2002), "Politics, war and youth culture in Sierra Leone : an alternative interpretation", *African Security Review*, 11, 3.

- McIntyre, A. (2003), "Rights, Roots and Recruitment: the Youth Factor in Africa's Armed Conflicts", *African Security Review*, 12, 2.
- McIntyre, A. (2004), ed., *Invisible Stakeholders: the Impact of Children on War*, Institute of Security Studies.
- Mckay/Mazurana, (2002), "Girls in Militaries, Paramilitaries and Armed Opposition Groups", Winnipeg: Available at: <http://www.waraffectedchildren.gc.ca/girls-en.asp>.
- Meijer, R. (2000, Ed.), *Alienation or Integration of Arab Youth – Between Family, State, and Street*, Richmond: Curzon Press.
- Mistry, M. (2000), "Muslim Youth and Contemporary Challenges: A Conference Report", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 20, 1.
- Moller, H. (1968), "Youth as a Force in the Modern World," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10(3),
- Morrill, C. (2004), "Reconciliation and *Gacaca*: The perceptions and peace-building potential of Rwandan Youth detainees," *The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, 6, 1.
- Munoz, M. (2000), "Arab Youth Today: The Generation Gap, Identity Crisis and Democratic Deficit", in Meijer, R. (ed.), *Alienation or Integration of Arab Youth – Between Family, State, and Street*, Richmond: Curzon Press.
- Nkinyangi (1990), "Student Protest in Sub-Saharan Africa" *Higher Education*, 22.
- Nolte, I. (2004), "Identity and Violence: the Politics of Youth in Ijebu, Nigeria", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 42, 1.
- Olawale, I. (2004), *Youth Culture and State Collapse in Sierra Leone: Between Causality and Casualty Theses*, Paper Presented at the UNU-WIDER Conference, Helsinki, 3-6 June
- O'Toole, T. (2003), "Engaging with Young People's Conceptions of the Political", *Children's Geographies*, 1,1.
- Parson, I. (2004), "Youth, Conflict and Identity: Political Mobilization and Subjection in Angola", in McIntyre, A. (ed.), *Invisible Stakeholders: the Impact of Children on War*, Institute of Security Studies.
- Peters/Richards (1998) « Jeunes combattants parlant de la guerre et de la paix en Sierra Leone », *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 38, 150/152.
- Peters/ Richards (1998), "Why we fight': voices of youth combatants in Sierra Leone" *Africa / International African Institute*, 68,2.
- Peters/Richards/Vlassenroot (2003), "What Happens to Youth During and After Wars? A Preliminary Review of Literature on Africa and an Assessment of the Debate", RAWOO Working Paper
- Population Council (2004) "Transitions to Adulthood: Creating Safe Spaces", website available at: <http://www.popcouncil.org/ta/critic.html> (downloaded 15 October, 2004).
- Rabwoni. O. (2002), "Reflections on Youth and Militarism in Contemporary Africa", in De Waal/Argenti, *Young Africa: Realising the Rights of Children and Youth*, Africa World Press.
- Reno, W.(1996), *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reno, W. (2002), "La "sale petite guerre" du Liberia", *Politique Africaine*, 88.
- Richards, P. (1996), "Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone", The International African Institute, James Currey and Heinemann, Oxford and Portsmouth (N.H.)

- Richards, P. (1995), 'Rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone: Crisis of Youth?' in Farley, O. (eds.), *Conflict in Africa*, London: Tauris Academic Studies.
- Rodgers, D. (1999), "Youth Gangs and Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Literature Survey", LCR Sustainable Development Working Paper no.4, The World Bank, Latin America and Caribbean Region.
- Ruble *et al* (2003, Eds.), *Youth Explosion in Developing World Cities: Approaches to Reducing Poverty and Conflict in Urban Age*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington DC.
- Ruel, M. (2002), "The structural articulation of generations in Africa", *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 42, 165.
- Sawyer, A. (2004), "Violent Conflicts and Governance Challenges in West Africa: the Case of the Mano River Basin Area", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 42, 3.
- Smyth, M. (2003), *The militarization of youth in violently divided societies: some observations on Northern Ireland, South Africa and the Middle East*, U.S. Institute for Peace, Draft.
- Sommers, M. (2003a), "Youth, War and Urban Africa: Challenges, Misunderstandings, and Opportunities" in Ruble *et al.* (eds.), *Youth Explosion in Developing World Cities: Approaches to Reducing Poverty and Conflict in Urban Age*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington DC.
- Sommers, M. (2003b), *Urbanization, War and Africa's Youth at Risk: Towards Understanding and Addressing Future Challenges*, Atlanta: CARE-USA.
- Sommers, M. (2001), "Young, Male and Pentecostal: Urban Refugees in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 14, 4.
- Spinks, C. (2002), "Pentecostal Christianity and Young Africans", in De Waal/Argenti (Eds.), *Young Africa: Realising the Rights of Children and Youth*, Africa World Press.
- Tessler (2000), "Morocco's Next Political Generation" in Meijer, R. (Ed.), *Alienation or Integration of Arab Youth – Between Family, State, and Street*, Richmond: Curzon Press.
- Twun/Danso (2003), *Africa's Young Soldiers: the Cooption of Childhood*, Institute of Security Studies
- UNDP (2002), *The Arab Human Development Report 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*. Amman: United Nations Development Program.
- UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO (2003), *Adolescents: Profiles in Empowerment*, New York: UNICEF
- Ukeje (2001), "Youth, Violence and the Collapse of Public Order in the Niger Delta of Nigeria", *Africa Development*, XXVI, ½.
- Van Diesen, A. (1999), *Aid to Mozambique: an End to Dependence?*, Christian Aid Report.
- Wessels, M (2002), "Recruitment of Child Soldiers in Sub-Saharan Africa: An ecological analysis," *Comparative Social Science Review*, 20,
- Youniss *et al* (2002), "Youth Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century", *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 12, 1.
- Yousef, T. (2003) "Youth in the Middle East and North Africa: Demography, Employment and Conflict" in Ruble *et al.* (eds.), *Youth Explosion in Developing World Cities: Approaches to Reducing Poverty and Conflict in Urban Age*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington DC.
- Zakaria, F. (2001), 'The Roots of Rage', *Newsweek*, 138, 16.



## Review of UNDP programming

---

This chapter analyses the extent to which UNDP and its country offices have tackled youth issues, with a special focus on conflict and post-conflict situations. There is currently very little consolidated information about whether and how UNDP has addressed youth issues.<sup>119</sup>

This chapter focuses on UNDP's youth programmes and projects during the past 5 years and tries to map the range of interventions and approaches and their impact with the intention to assess how challenges were addressed and to highlight the existing gaps. This chapter provides a snapshot of UNDP's work in this area. The primary methodology was a desk review of project documentation, available literature, and where possible, interviews with relevant project staff in UNDP regional bureaux as well as UNDP country offices.

The chapter begins with a general discussion of UNDP's involvement in and approaches to youth, then looks at some specific activities or programmes in various parts of the world, particularly in post-conflict situations. This is followed by an examination of relevant UNDP activities in Africa, and in the focus countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone. It ends with conclusions and recommendations arising from the research.

UNDP Country Offices are increasingly targeting youth in their development work. As part of the Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF) reporting for 2004, youth was mentioned by 32 Country Offices, in all five UNDP regions.<sup>120</sup> Youth is mostly targeted in the context of Poverty Reduction and the Achievement of MDGs (Goal 1) and Responding to HIV/AIDS (Goal 5). Seven COs reported on youth under the "Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding" service line (Goal 4.1).

The MYFF report shows a number of trends in UNDP involvement with youth. First, there is a strong emphasis on training, both in the context of employment strategies (Madagascar, Pakistan, Cameroon) and for conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Lebanon, Zimbabwe, Rwanda). Second, support to youth fora, youth councils and youth networks seems to be a preferred way of UNDP COs to become engaged with youth (Zimbabwe, Barbados). Third, UNDP has been active in supporting national governments and partners in the development of youth strategies and action plans (Jordan, Bahrain, and Bosnia-Herzegovina).

For the most part, these interventions have been small, ad hoc and of limited duration. With few exceptions, projects have reached only small numbers of youth and have not reached the majority of youth in societies. Although some of this can be attributed to limited resources, it is also derived from problematic assumptions and definitions of youth in these projects. Often youth are not well defined or identified, and the outcomes

---

<sup>119</sup> Marie Dimond, BCPR NY: Original Query to the UNDP Conflict Prevention and Recovery Network. Date: 23 March 2004

<sup>120</sup> Of the 32 countries, 9 are in Africa, followed by Europe and the CIS (7), Asia and the Pacific (7), Arab States (5), Latin America and the Caribbean (4). 5 COs (Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Swaziland) referred to youth more than once in their MYFF reporting.

are too unspecified. Although many projects and activities stress participation and consultation with youth, they do not identify which youth they are targeting and often refer to youth as a homogeneous category. There is also an over-reliance on youth leaders, graduates, and youth organisations when it is not clear which youth they represent.

Nevertheless, these activities demonstrate that UNDP is not only active in addressing the situation of youth but that it recognises that development involves youth. Hence, youth have been identified as both important partners for development but as a key constituency for promoting conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

## UNDP and youth

UNDP implements its global development mandate through the practice areas of poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery, energy and environment and HIV/AIDS. However, the global quest for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals has included other pressing issues in the development agenda not necessarily reflected in these practice areas. Through the emphasis on ownership and participation, the MDGs have initiated a new discussion on the involvement of youth in the attainment of the MDGs.

Youth is not part of the UNDP practice areas nor is it a crosscutting issue. This omission may be the result of mandate limitations since young people are generally considered to be those that fall within the 15-24 age group and children up to the age of 18 are the focus of the mandate of UNICEF. In addition, there are other UN agencies that cover specific areas of youth and development such as ILO – employment, UNODC – drugs and crime, UNAIDS – the fight against HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the main UNDP country offices documents such as common country frameworks or strategic results frameworks have the tendency to follow the practice areas lines which does not leave much room for an articulated programmatic approach to youth apart from the odd reference to youth problems. Furthermore, at headquarters level, youth related activities focus more on awareness raising and conferences and therefore are not very output oriented.

Speaking at the International Peace Academy, the UNDP Administrator, Mark Malloch Brown, noted that, “many countries are confronted with a huge youth unemployment problem, and beyond that, a youth participation problem. Economic systems are just not producing growth or jobs at a rate to absorb them into the labour market. Combine that with political systems that are not genuinely participatory and representative, and we are stoking up a crisis.”<sup>121</sup> In another speech, on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty the UNDP Administrator considers “the achievement of MDGs is an agenda for young people. Young people not only represent the future, they are also a rich source of the kinds of innovative solutions needed to address some of the

---

<sup>121</sup> Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator UNDP to The International Peace Academy Conference: Strengthening the Security-Development Nexus: Conflict, Peace and Development in the 21st Century 5 December 2003

most pressing problems facing us today.<sup>122</sup> The Secretary-General has at one point also recommended that UNDP country offices establish “youth theme groups ...to provide a coordination forum for United Nations agencies and related organisations involved with projects, programs and other activities targeting youth.”<sup>123</sup>

Through this and through activities on the ground, a case is being made for a concerted UNDP involvement in tackling youth issues. As this chapter will show, despite not being a separate practice area and despite the lack of a defined location of responsibility, there are many UNDP country offices in all the regions of the world that have worked to varying degrees on youth and development.

## Selected youth-related programmes and projects

Various UNDP programmes and projects around the world deal with youth issues focusing on different dimensions<sup>124</sup>. Some country offices have been addressing youth issues through fully-fledged programmes. UNDP in Kosovo started a strong youth portfolio immediately after the conflict in 1999 and UNDP in Kenya has also been involved in youth issues from early 1990s. UNDP Egypt has been undertaking a survey to learn more about youth aspirations in order to develop a project on empowering youth, as well as focusing on media interventions and targeting youth for the MDGs. Other country offices have been involved in small-scale interventions and ad hoc initiatives (a selection of which are presented in the first annex).

Youth empowerment and participation in post-conflict recovery and social reconciliation have been part of programming in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Reintegration of young ex-combatants has been supported in Afghanistan, Republic of Congo and Niger. Certain programmes like the small-scale community based interventions in Nepal or the rehabilitation programme in Lebanon have a strong emphasis on community work with activities aimed at conflict prevention and peace education. The Colombia programme is also a good example of activities aimed at preventing young people from being recruited by non-official armed forces by strengthening the employment, education and social opportunities of vulnerable young people.

Training and skills development is the most frequent approach of UNDP youth interventions either as stand-alone interventions or as adjacent components to any job creation or employment generation programmes. Such training programmes have been established in Burkina Faso and Zambia. Somalia and Kenya offer experiences where training centres were established to equip young people with the skills required by the private sector for rehabilitation and development work (Somalia) or linking youth Training with Employment Creation Project (Kenya). Youth employment programmes have also been up and running in East Timor and Macedonia. In countries like Jordan,

---

<sup>122</sup> Youth – A New Voice for the Millennium Development Goals, 17 October 2004

<sup>123</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, A/54/59 §86.

<sup>124</sup> Youth programmes in crisis & post-conflict settings/comparative experiences/HQ Date: 31 March 2004. Prepared by Gita Swamy, Facilitator, CPRP Network

Bosnia and Sierra Leone, UNDP has supported the formulation of national youth policies as instruments that can help the mainstreaming of youth issues in policy making.

The following section presents a selection of programmes and projects that UNDP country offices or regional bureaux have been implementing throughout the world. It should be noted that this section is not exhaustive or comprehensive.

### *United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and youth*

The work of the United Nations Volunteers' has a natural link with youth, including the promotion of a culture of volunteerism and the mobilisation of volunteers where youth is an important target group.<sup>125</sup> UNV's close working relationship with UNDP means that many of UNDP programmes on youth are implemented in cooperation with UNV technical expertise and the support of both international and national volunteers, who work on a peer to peer basis. Volunteers are generally engaged in targeted activities at the local level, increasing citizen participation in such areas as infrastructure and micro-enterprise development, education, youth and student programmes, information and communications technology and business-community relations. UNV has launched pilot projects to explore ways in which, by building on and promoting a culture of volunteerism, youth can be mobilised and engaged in activities at the community, regional and national level.

Examples can be seen in countries from all the regions of the world such as Nicaragua, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Bosnia, UNV is working to support and complement efforts towards fostering understanding and cooperation among youth from Croat, Serb and Bosnian communities through radio programmes, conflict transformation workshops and skills training for employment. With UNDP, UNV has a 2-year youth project in Kyrgyzstan looks at the country through a youth perspective as well as targeting youth involvement in the MDGs, with a specific emphasis on goal 8 of fostering international exchange between youth organisations within the country and with its neighbours. In Burkina Faso, UNV has partnered with NGOs, youth associations and the government to further the social development of the country's marginalised youth. Emergency response to conflict and natural disasters, longer-term prevention actions and assistance in the recovery process are major areas of involvement for UNV. Nearly 40 per cent of UNV volunteers supported activities such as assisting in the reintegration of ex-combatants, fostering inter-communal collaboration among divided groups, conducting civic education, promoting disaster preparedness and delivering humanitarian assistance. The UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery and UNV have set up a rapid-deployment facility to establish a standby team of trained, experienced volunteers who can be immediately deployed to UNDP country offices. Over 20 UNDP country offices have benefited from this facility.

---

<sup>125</sup> Information from the UNV website ([www.unvolunteers.org](http://www.unvolunteers.org)) and the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Program and of the United Nations Population Fund, Annual session 2004, 14-23 June 2004, Geneva. Item 8 of the provisional agenda: United Nations Volunteers

### *National Human Development Reports on youth in post-conflict countries*

Since the publication of the first Global Human Report in 1990, HDRs have become an increasingly important tool of policy analysis in all developing countries. These reports are usually accompanied by policy recommendations for all relevant development stakeholders, making them reference documents for development challenges.

A brief search on the UNDP Human Development Reports website shows that out of a total of 525 reports published until now, only 9 appear to have some focus on youth.<sup>126</sup> Lebanon (1998), Bosnia (2000), Jordan (2000), Trinidad and Tobago (2000), Lithuania (2001) and Croatia (2004) have dedicated a full NHDR on the theme. Bhutan and Maldives are currently in the process of finalising their NHDRs on youth.

In this context, it is worth reviewing some of these reports, particularly those related to conflict, to see the themes elaborated, the lessons learned, the recommendations offered, and the extent to which the voice of the youth was represented in these reports.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina 2000** UNDP dedicated its second NHDR for Bosnia and Herzegovina to the subject of youth, prepared by a group that included youth and people working on youth related issues from the government and non-governmental organisations. It focuses on three sectors from the perspective of youth: education, health and employment. It offers a good description of the youth situation in the country based on survey data that are well disaggregated along ethnic lines.

The Bosnian HDR builds on the findings of a survey that reveals that 62% of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina would leave the country if given the opportunity.<sup>127</sup> This shows that several years of post-war peacebuilding efforts still have not brought enough opportunities and hope for the young people to stay and build their lives in their own country.<sup>128</sup> The report reflects a sense of post-war hopelessness and dissatisfaction among youth. It points out that after a lengthy period of communism followed by the outbreak of war, youth in Bosnia need a proper education system that is not based on curriculum divided on ethnic lines. Youth also need training on how to enter the market economy and how to channel their small moneymaking ideas into proper sources of income. In other words, as the authors put it, they know they can play a significant role in reshaping the country but desperately need more resources, proper training and guidance.<sup>129</sup> Recommendations in the report emphasise increased employment opportunities through various interventions such as support for self-employment through micro-credit systems, introduction of innovative employment generation schemes such as tax exemption or reduced hours, and vocational training programmes for post-secondary school graduates. It also points out that improving the youth situation is only possible through the full participation of youth, recognition of their problems, and the involvement of youth in finding solutions.

---

<sup>126</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/>

<sup>127</sup> HDR Bosnia and Herzegovina 2000 Youth, p. 11

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32

**Croatia 2004** The Croatian NHDR, *The Position of Youth in Croatian society and relations*, selected youth as a focus after judging that youth and their status in the country is one of the key questions to development and foundation to further enhancement of Croatian society. It was prepared through an interactive and consultative process with youth throughout Croatia. It was written by youth, who controlled the process and content of the exercise, and had as one of its main aims to inspire youth to become more proactive and to be part of the implementation of the report's recommendations. The report exemplifies the overall goal of NHDRs to serve as not only public awareness raising and reference documents but as policy-making tools directed to the relevant stakeholders.

It follows the same approach as the Bosnian report but is enriched with other elements such as an overview of the institutional frameworks for youth and the role of the state in dealing with youth issues. Croatia has a National Programme of Action for Youth, adopted in 2003, which contains a national youth policy and strategy for its implementation including the participation of youth. The report elaborates on the most problematic issues of youth in Croatia starting with the difficulty of finding appropriate employment and dependency issues. Apart from economy, the report also deals with participation and marginalisation issues, and devotes a chapter to conflict, violence and discrimination, which portrays a society still coping with xenophobia, racism, prejudice and racism. The report however provides positive examples of how to deal with these issues leading to useful policy recommendations building on current experiences. Recommendations are based on focus group discussions with young people, and identify the institutions responsible for carrying them out. Unfortunately, despite offering a conflict perspective on youth affairs, the report does not identify any potential interventions aimed at minorities or how to enhance their opportunities in the country.

**Lebanon 1998** The NHDR for Lebanon *Youth and Development* follows the same sectoral approach as the Croatian and Bosnian reports by focusing on youth and employment, education and health together with a view on public participation. The civil war in the country from 1975 to 1990 resulted in massive international and internal migration and the report observes that the phenomenon is more widespread for youth than for the other age groups.<sup>130</sup> The report emphasises that policies dealing with international migration should concentrate in the reduction of the outflow of young persons with higher education through unemployment reduction measures and in the attraction of expatriates through established programmes such as TOKTEN.<sup>131</sup> Increasing employment opportunities and encouraging entrepreneurship among young persons through special programmes and through a manpower plan reconciling education with labour demand is also highlighted in the report. However, there is also a need to stimulate the economy to improve the number of employment opportunities overall, as well as providing better quality education.

---

<sup>130</sup> NHDR Lebanon 1998, p.30.

<sup>131</sup> TOKTEN stands for Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals. It is a UNDP initiative in cooperation with UNV and IOM that aims to attract qualified expatriate professionals from developing countries to return to their countries of origin for short periods to share the skills they have gained during their residence in developed countries.

Traditionally youth have played an active part in Lebanon's civil and political life. The chapter on public participation points to youth as the beneficiaries of development activities but also as potential contributors to development. However, there is still a need to create mechanisms for youth participation at all levels, as well as developing integrated youth policies. The report draws attention to rising differences along lines of religious confession as one of the most negative consequences of the war.<sup>132</sup> Many areas in the country are dominated by a single confession and this has important repercussions in the social upbringing of young people with youth generally socialising and going to school together with the same category of people as their own. The report recommends that where possible, schools should be multi-confessional, helping to re-establish inter-confessional harmony and facilitating the return of the displaced persons.<sup>133</sup>

### ***FYR of Macedonia: Youth Employment Support (YES) Programme***

Generation of employment through public investment, accompanied by capacity building programmes, is an important approach in post-conflict situations where the inclusion of IDPs or other people affected by the conflict can help in building a peaceful future. In Macedonia, the YES job creation project<sup>134</sup> funded by UNDP, USAID the Government of Norway was intended as a response to high unemployment rates and the social exclusion of large segments of the population, which had been further exacerbated by the recent conflict in the country. The programme reached a total of 2,043 workers.

The target beneficiaries of the programme were unemployed youth between the ages of 18 and 30, who comprise 50% of the unemployed nationally. While emphasis was given to socially vulnerable groups, unemployed youth with higher levels of education and skills were also eligible for inclusion in the employment programme for positions requiring professional expertise. Equitable inclusion of women and of minorities was promoted throughout the project. This was undertaken within the framework of reducing socio-economic pressures that exacerbate ethnic tensions and contribute to confidence-building, as well empowering local authorities in decision-making and project formulation.

The programme covered all local government units (123) of Macedonia over a period of one year (October 2001 – February 2003). It focused on locally initiated projects for small, labour-intensive public works to generate employment opportunities for unemployed youth. These public works, or activities, were selected based on locally identified priority needs. Municipal authorities were responsible for organising community involvement in identifying priority needs, recruiting youth for employment in the activities identified and supervising the implementation of their respective activities. Project partners included the Ministry of Local Self-Government, municipal authorities, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Transport and Communication.

---

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* p. 104

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> UNDP (300,000 USD), USAID (2,000,000 USD) and Government of Norway (168000 USD).

Activities included: infrastructure repair or rehabilitation of public space and restoration of basic social services (including walkways, riverbeds, sports and recreation facilities, and public parks, national reserves and gardens); repair and/or upgrading of municipal water and sanitation and/or road infrastructure; restoration and maintenance of historic and cultural heritage sites; solid waste removal and environmental management

Vocational training was an integral part of the activities to develop the capacities of participants and provide them with marketable skills to facilitate their entry into the labour force and the future attainment of sustainable employment. Also notable was a Matching Funds component aimed at (a) creating temporary employment in municipalities with a low level of social development and high unemployment, and (b) testing mechanisms for creating employment through innovative initiatives of local organisations. Although the component attracted a considerable amount of local municipal funds, the private sector contributed only 1% of the total allocated funds. Despite the weak state of private sector in Macedonia, the evaluation report (March 2003) considered this the only area where additional efforts would have produced more results, and suggested that a greater role for the private sector and public-private partnerships has considerable potential for youth employment generation schemes.

### ***Kosovo: Youth Post-Conflict Participation Project and Volunteers for Peace Project***

The implementation of various youth projects in Kosovo by UNDP in cooperation with other partners testifies to the importance that UNDP places on youth for Kosovo's peaceful development. Kosovo has one of the youngest populations in Europe, with approximately half of the population under the age of 25. After the war, UNDP initiated the Youth Post-Conflict Participation Project (YPCPP) executed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and in partnership with the Department of Youth in UNMIK. The project with a budget of 300,000 USD sought to mobilise youth to research, prioritise and initiate development sub-projects at the regional level. It also aimed to leave in place a network of youth-led Regional Working Groups and a Representative Youth Body, who, with support from the community and government structures, will continue to address matters of interest to them. The project's direct beneficiaries totalled 5,000 young people and another 20,000 indirectly.

In implementing the project, the YPCPP worked in partnership with Kosovo NGOs and associations, such as the Kosovo Youth Council (KYC), Scouting Movement, Youth of Prizren, Post-pessimists, the Youth Forums, as well as youth and school organisations. Youth representatives organised and attended a consultative Kosovo Youth Congress in the spring of 2001; and, subsequently established a representative youth body to advise and advocate on behalf of youth priorities and youth led regional working groups

Following the wide scale mobilisation of youth under the YPCPP, UNDP Kosovo in cooperation with UNV then launched a community initiative (700,000 USD) called Volunteers for Peace (V4P). The project is open to youth from all ethnic groups, and aims to be of direct benefit to local communities, the general public, the PISG, the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), development actors, UN agencies and KFOR. Although limited in scale (1000 volunteers) V4P introduced volunteerism as an approach to



engage young people in activities such as: supporting community-based activities; providing assistance in emergency situations; promoting peace-building and human rights; transferring technical skills; increasing ethnic and community interaction through the tackling of common problems; improving gender awareness, etc. Upon completion of its three phases, the management of the V4P programme is to be handed over to the Kosovo Youth Network.

### ***Nepal: Support to Peace and Development Initiatives***

Violent conflict and civil unrest in the last few years in Nepal has disrupted society, violated human rights and worsened the economic situation. A group of donors formed a Peace Support Group (PSG) and established a Trust Fund with the idea of supporting local initiatives for peace and development focusing particularly on youth, women and disadvantaged groups. Through this Trust Fund, UNDP started the Support for Peace and Development Initiatives (SPDI) programme in 2001.<sup>135</sup>

The overall objective of the programme is to support peace initiatives of local NGOs. The specific objective of the SPDI is to enable Nepali civil society to participate in the process of peace building by supporting community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as associations and networks working in the field of peace, conflict resolution and prevention and human rights. The initiative has a separate component on the mobilisation of youth recognising that the violent conflict has adversely affected youth, compelling many of them either to join the insurgency or to flee from their communities. SPDI supports youth mobilisation for peacebuilding, particularly through projects that create opportunities for youth participation. The fund places particular emphasis on initiatives which focus on activities outside of the Kathmandu valley and which address local needs in conflict prevention.

SPDI is composed of a total of 88 projects related to conflict transformation/peace building and rehabilitation activities, implemented through 48 partner NGOs. Some of the project approaches related to youth include:

- **Peace Radio Programme.** Radio programmes prepared by local youths, focussing on youth issues with particular reference to the current conflict, human rights and social affairs.
- **Human Rights Education in Schools.** 6-month human rights and child rights awareness classes aimed at enabling children to discuss with rebels about their basic rights (e.g., Child Rights Convention 1990 and Geneva Convention ban on use of children in the armed conflict).

---

<sup>135</sup> The group of donors, consisting of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Royal Danish Embassy, Embassy of Finland, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Norwegian Embassy, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and UK Department for International Development (DFID), raised nearly 3,000,000 USD in support to this programme. For detailed information please see the programme website [www.spdi.org.np](http://www.spdi.org.np).

- **Youths and Sports** programme brought youths from highly conflict affected Village Development Committee (VDCs) to the district headquarters to interact among themselves and with the youths less affected by the conflict through volleyball competition and athletics event.
- **Empowerment of internally displaced young women** through informal training on women's rights, literacy, leadership and entrepreneurship, and skills such as handicrafts and driving.
- **Youth Peace Conferences** to bring together a cross-section of rural Nepali youth to identify a common agenda and strategies for peacebuilding process in Nepal.

A series of problems have had an impact upon the smooth implementation of the programme. Youth in Nepal – as elsewhere in conflict situations - are trapped between the conflicting parties. Rebels lure them to join the militia while the army always suspects youths as rebels. It frequently proved risky to assemble youth in groups because of security reasons. In addition, a large number of youths are fleeing away from villages for safety and employment opportunities making the target group focus problematic.

### ***Lebanon: Post-Conflict Socio-Economic Rehabilitation Programme for South Lebanon***

The Post-Conflict Socio-Economic Rehabilitation Programme for Southern Lebanon had a specific component on youth (October 2001–December 2002), supported by the Netherlands (300,000 USD). Its general objective was to mobilise youth in Southern Lebanon to contribute to post-conflict peacebuilding in order to avoid conflicts and tensions among communities with different political, social and religious groups. Its main aim is to facilitate the interaction of youth from different villages, confessions, and cultural affiliations in order to foster a feeling of common belonging and to develop a common strategy for youth contribution towards the development of their region. The UNDP country office in Lebanon provided technical, administrative and financial support for the execution of the project. Activities were implemented in cooperation with the Community Development Centres (CDC) of the Ministry of Social Affairs in South Lebanon, Community Based Organisations, and municipalities.

The outputs of the project included the identification of existing structures that can facilitate youth mobilisation, training community workers from Community Development Centres (CDC), organisation of discussion groups or strategic planning workshops with selected youth from different villages; helping to establish youth groups at the CDC, conducting training of trainers, organising youth camps linked to community volunteer projects, and encouraging community activities organised on a voluntary basis by the youth themselves.

The project had an intensive focus on community mobilisation and grassroots work based on the concept of youth groups. The youth themselves worked on the identification of issues and concern through questionnaires and in cooperation with the CDCs, municipalities, and NGOs, implemented 17 different community based projects. It also emphasised training to develop communication and leadership skills of CDC

workers to enhance their capacity in facilitating youth groups. The projects varied from the rehabilitation of sports facilities, public gardens, computer centres, movie clubs and others. Projects were formulated and implemented with attention being paid to inter-village and inter-group approaches. The end result was that the implementation of these activities served also a mechanism for bringing youth together from different backgrounds to foster consensus building, peace building, citizenship and sense of belonging.

The project has transformed the issue of participation into fruitful actions leading to joint project formulation and implementation. These community-based interventions provide a strong incentive for young people to interact and work with each other particularly when these activities are directly related to their well-being. A cultural component taking youth to sites of historical importance in the country also introduced youth to appreciate their country as a whole. The very fact that this was a sub-project component part of a larger peace-building programme testifies to relevance of youth issues and their important role in post-conflict situations.

### ***Palestine: Community Based Youth Participation and Development Project (SHAREK)***

Launched by UNDP in 1997, the Community Based Youth Participation and Development project was aimed at sustainable human development when most activities in the Palestinian authority were focused on reconstruction. After 14 months, the project was terminated because the level of community participation and involvement of youth in the planning and implementation of the project's activities was considered to be insufficient. The project was redesigned and entered into a second and third phase (2002-2004) as Sharek I and II.

Sharek sought to empower youth between 14 and 24 years of age to fully participate and contribute to the development of Palestinian society, where three quarters of the population is under the age of 29. It was run by young people with the philosophy of encouraging youth participation in the West Bank and Gaza and aimed for 50% participation of young women. Sharek supports fledgling youth organisations in starting up, seeking funding, building their capacity and implementing projects, funds existing and new Palestinian youth organisations, clubs and NGOs with the aim of establishing a solid network of youth from diverse organisations across the Palestinian Territories.<sup>136</sup> The underlying assumption of the programme was that youth understand more than any other party about their problems, needs, rehabilitation requirements and development priorities and therefore should participate in identifying and addressing those needs and priorities. The immediate objectives of the project were to increase the ability of youth to identify, plan and manage their own development initiatives and to ensure the long-term sustainability of youth organisations in addressing community needs. It was also intended that decisions would be based on recommendations by youth themselves

---

<sup>136</sup> Sharek in Arabic means participation. For a detailed list of initiatives see [www.sharek.org](http://www.sharek.org).

through consultations with members of local youth groups. Young people are the “subjects (rather than objects) of their own development.”<sup>137</sup>

Between 1997 and 2003, the Sharek programme funded over 200 youth clubs and voluntary agencies with a youth focus. Direct financial assistance in the form of grants has been utilised by these organisations to develop and provide a range of initiatives. Sharek has provided a model of youth engagement where young people are not beneficiaries but agents of change capable of releasing their creative energies, and capacity to mobilise and plan together. One of the innovative ideas was a tutoring programme of university students with younger high school students to improve education as well as building trust and confidence. Other activities included a youth run legal counselling centre and a youth and media network.

The long term approach and successes of the project drew the attention of other donor organisations, bringing support and resources from the Government of Japan (\$200,000 grant for summer camps), a municipality in Belgium (117,000 Euro for employment generation activities for female youth in Bethlehem district) the Near East Foundation, USAID (\$450,000 for job creation) and United Nations Volunteer Programme (UNV). The regard held for the project was demonstrated when it was called by the Ministry of Youth and Sports to lead the process of consultations and drafting a new and improved Palestinian Youth Law. Additional work included cooperation with other ministries, the Olympic committee as well as academic institutions and universities. In addition, Sharek was able to mobilise private sector leaders such as Coca Cola/Palestine, Jawal mobile phone services, Arab Bank, Bank of Palestine and others, to support the retraining of newly graduates of the colleges of Business and finance.

An important aspect is sustainability. The Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) was launched by UNDP in 1997. By 2004 Sharek had established itself as an independent organisation outside the framework of the UNDP, although UNDP retains an important advisory role in Sharek’s development. Nevertheless, this project has also been a learning exercise, with lessons in obstacles to the participation of girls (such as parental resistance, security questions), capacity gaps in youth organisations, youth members tended to be students with difficulties in attracting out of school youth, lack of understanding of youth needs by the community.<sup>138</sup>

### ***Colombia: Reconciliation and Development Programme (REDES)***

The UNDP country office in Colombia initiated a process of re-adapting its cooperation strategy in the country to focus explicitly on conflict prevention, achieved in part through a Framework of Cooperation between BCPR and UNDP Colombia. This serves as the basis for the Reconciliation and Development Programme (REDES), designed and established in mid 2003 as an attempt to overcome conflict in three regions of the country (Oriente Antioqueño, Meta and Montes de María). REDES draws upon existing positive peace-building experiences and seeks to promote social organisation and the

---

<sup>137</sup> UNDP Project Document, Youth Development Program Sharek II, PAL/02/J14/53/31

<sup>138</sup> Evaluation of the Community Based Youth Participation and Development Project “Sharek”, 2001.

mobilisation of local authorities, civil society organisations, indigenous, peasant and Afro-Colombian communities. The underlying conceptualisation of the project is to link development with conflict prevention and recovery by tackling poverty, strengthening local governance and local institutions.

Among its components, REDES has an ongoing youth project in the Montes de María region set to promote children's and youth rights. The project is being executed by an NGO called Fundación Antonio Restrepo Barco and is supported by the national government as well as by UN agencies such as UNDP and IOM. The project has a budget of nearly 280,000 USD (240,000 coming from UNDP and nearly 20,000 each from the IOM and the NGO).

The project is designed to have four phases, of which Phase Two is currently being implemented. In the first phase, a mapping of risk/vulnerabilities affecting children and youth rights was undertaken, as well as factors that protect those rights. Target groups and beneficiaries were also identified based on such considerations as municipalities with the greatest percentage of conflict-affected children and youth, the quality of education infrastructure and drop out rates, youth with no access to rural economic opportunities. The current phase aims to create incentives to prevent children and youth's recruitment into the armed conflict. Activities such as providing access to financing, technical assistance, business support, knowledge and information have been accompanied by the promotion of open dialogue on children's and youth rights. This aims to create an enabling environment for the third stage of the project, which will feature an inclusive and participatory process for formulating public policy children and youth rights, particularly relating to preventing the forced recruitment of young people into armed groups. The final phase focuses on identifying best practices and lessons learnt for the possible replication of the project in other areas of the country. All four phases emphasise support to initiatives oriented towards increasing democratic security, competitiveness and development, strengthening of social equity and promoting social organisation together with effective approaches to managing the rural economy.

## UNDP youth-related activities and programming in Africa

UNDP has responded to some of the challenges concerning the youth situation in Africa through different mechanisms: international forums and summits, targeted regional and country programmes, and reorienting programming to take youth into account.

### International youth forums and summits

Among the many UNDP activities focusing on youth affairs in Africa, global or regional conferences and initiatives on youth have become fixtures. A few of them are mentioned below:

**Youth, Peace and Development Forum:** In partnership with ECOWAS and the Mano River Union, the regional programme to strengthen Africa's regional capacities for peacebuilding of the Regional Bureau for Africa/UNDP held a Youth, Peace and Development Forum in Guinea, Conakry in January 2005. The forum is part of the larger Mano River Union Peace Initiative (ECOWAS initiative based in Freetown and

supported by USAID and UNDP) to develop a framework for a comprehensive sub-regional programmatic initiative to enhance youth participation in reconciliation, stabilisation and peace building in the Mano River Union countries (Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone) and Cote d'Ivoire. The motives for holding the forum were based on the recognition that "the condition of youth amounts to an emergency; it is a crisis that threatens a generation and societies."<sup>139</sup> Through consultations in the region, it became evident that after involvement in conflict, youth feel neglected and marginalised during peace processes, thus post-conflict periods tend to be highly unsatisfactory for youth. A select number of youth leaders from all Mano River Union countries were invited to the forum to discuss their concerns, needs and priorities as a basis for identifying cross-border pilot projects to be financed in an effort to kick-start a process of involving youth in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction in the region.

In addition to the MRU region, UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa also held a strategy meeting in April 2004 to bring youth in the Great Lakes region into ongoing peace initiatives for Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. The main purpose of the meeting was to facilitate a discussion by youth representatives of the four core countries and selected development partners on a proposed forum in which youth from these conflict-ridden countries could make their views on current peace efforts known to national and regional policymakers as well as to the development community.

**Africa 2015 (Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit):** UNDP's Africa 2015 is an advocacy campaign designed to complement and advance the efforts of all UN agencies, civil society groups and government agencies already working to achieve the MDGs on the continent. It aims to create sustained awareness and engage multiple audiences and constituencies in fighting poverty and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Africa 2015 uses multiple and simultaneous vehicles of communication as agents for change that can resonate with many different types of audiences, particularly, young people.<sup>140</sup> In June 2004, a Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit was held in Senegal as part of the Africa 2015 initiative and was intended to help the next generation of Africa's leaders exchange ideas and experiences to deal with the tremendous development challenges facing the continent. The Summit was organised through an innovative collaboration between UNDP and a non-governmental organisation, The Global Peace Initiative of Women, with support from the private sector. The goal was to help young leaders develop programmes that address these issues and to provide a global platform for the voices of talented young African professionals. The Summit intended to establish a permanent network of young African leaders who can work across the continent to monitor the progress of their projects and who can achieve a voice globally on key issues pertaining to Africa.

**Equator Initiative Youth Exchange (EIYE):** The Equator Initiative is a partnership of UNDP, civil society, business, government and communities to help build the profile and raise the profile of grassroots efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The youth exchange is a significant component of

---

<sup>139</sup> Dr. Sam Amoo, director of the UNDP RBA Regional Programme, *New African*, February 2005.

<sup>140</sup> [www.africa2015.org](http://www.africa2015.org)

UNDP's Equator Initiative's Learning Exchange programme.<sup>141</sup> Implemented by Canada World Youth, the first EIYE began in September 2003. Partners seek to facilitate learning and information exchange among youth through educational and work experience in the countries involved. The exchange is also intended to promote skill development and inter-cultural dialogue and create a long-term network among African youth and the various communities they visit. An expanded programme will be launched in 2004.

**Regional Training Seminar on National Youth Policy:** The International Council on National Youth Policy (ICNYP) was established in January 2002 as a response to General Assembly Resolution 56/117 on "Policies and programmes involving youth".<sup>142</sup> In 2003, ICNYP signed an agreement with UNDP and UNV to hold the first Regional Training Seminar on National Youth Policy for Central and East African Countries, in Addis Ababa. The Seminar was organised by ICNYP in collaboration with UNDP's Central and East African Sub-Regional Resource Facility (UNDP-SURF-CEA).<sup>143</sup> Approximately 100 participants from 10 countries of Central and Eastern Africa, as well as South Africa and Ghana attended the seminar. It concluded with a set of recommendations to support the development of comprehensive national youth policies in the CEA sub-region. There was an agreement on the importance of mainstreaming the national youth policy with the major priority issues of the national development plan of each country as well as with regional and international standards.<sup>144</sup>

In addition, UNDP has a programme, **Support to the UN regional strategy for West Africa**, that contains components concerned with youth. One of its main objectives is to support the integration of conflict prevention and peacebuilding perspectives into UNDP policies, strategies and programmes in West Africa, with a special focus on unemployed youth.

## Youth-specific programmes

### *UNDP/UNESCO: Foundations for Africa's Future Leadership*

The project, Foundations for Africa's Future Leadership, is based on the assumption that one of the most serious challenges that Africa faces is the lack of human capacity to support economic and public sector reform. This lack of capacity was aggravated during the 1980s and 1990s by economic crisis, shrinking resources, public sector inefficiency and poor operational and institutional facilities as well as the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. (There have been many similar initiatives dealing with capacity building and leadership issues in Africa, such as the African Leadership Forum launched with UNDP support in 1998.)

---

<sup>141</sup> [www.equatorinitiative.org](http://www.equatorinitiative.org)

<sup>142</sup> <http://www.icnyp.net/>

<sup>143</sup> ICNYP/UNDP Training Seminar On National Youth Policy, 24-26 September 2003, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

The project covers the countries of Senegal, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, DRC, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Uganda. Its implementation takes place over a period of 18 months (February 2004 – July 2005). With a budget of 385,000 USD, the project aims to pilot activities in leadership training (including peace, conflict management and conflict prevention), workshops and capacity building of African university students and young professionals as well as placing African students in internships with the regional programmes and bodies and non-governmental organisations. The project is being implemented in joint cooperation between UNDP and UNESCO Dakar Office in Senegal and enjoys participation and support from a variety of partners such as the University of Peace (African Programme) in Geneva, University of Bradford in UK, Africa University in Zimbabwe, Ghana's Institute of Management and Public Administration, UNHCR, UNV, IOM as well as many other institutions.

Activities of the first phase of the project due to be completed in June 2005 include the preparation of curricula and modules on leadership, followed by leadership training workshops and internship placements. Leadership training does not cover only the political leadership but it extends to all sectors of society. Beneficiaries of the project include (a) university students and young professionals at universities both in Africa and overseas (b) new entrants in the labour market, local government officials, civil society representatives and teachers selected through other ongoing initiatives in the continent. Despite its ambitions, the project is limited to graduates and employed youth and does not reach out to the majority of youth not part of this elite, nor do the activities and number of countries involved match the budget.

### ***Zambia: Peak Performance Programme***

The Peak Performance Programme (PPP) is a Leadership and Personal Development training initiative introduced to Africa, implemented under the UNDP-Africa regional Programme for Innovative Co-operation Among the South (PICAS). The programme was designed to promote the exchange of experiences, technology, services, expertise and good practices among countries in Asia and Africa. It complements the Jobs for Africa programme launched as a joint initiative between ILO/UNDP in 1997 as a follow up to the World Social Summit. Based upon leadership training programmes in South East Asia, PPP is a training methodology and motivational and empowerment-tool that emphasises leadership skills, and the awakening of leadership and personal potentials. PPP initially focused on the leaders and economic players of tomorrow, whose thinking and perception has to be radically and positively oriented.

The programme started in Zambia in 1999. The initial focus on youth was soon expanded to other target categories including: senior Government Officials, Government employees, Members of Parliament, NGOs, CEO's in private sector, local government councillors, special groups such as women and religious organisations, and rural leaders. The programme has conducted over sixty workshops and trained over 2000 people, including in government youth centres and national management institutions in the country. There is also a very close relationship between the PPP and the Leadership Development Training being promoted by the UNDP's Learning Resource Centre through its Virtual Development Academy (VDA).



The success of the programme led to the mainstreaming of Leadership Skills Training and Development based on the PPP methodology in all UNDP programmes in the next cycle. On a regional level, the Office of the President of Ghana has requested UNDP-Ghana to help incorporate PPP as part of its training initiative for staff in various ministries, as well as at senior levels of the legislature. The new UNDP Country Cooperation Framework (2002-2006) of Swaziland includes PPP as part of UNDP's support for democratic governance.

## Responding to youth issues in existing programming

### *UNDP and youth in Sierra Leone*

In 2002, following the government's initiative to establish a separate Ministry for Youth and Sports, UNDP set up a Capacity Building Unit for policy formulation, research, project planning, supervision, monitoring and gender affairs. UNDP supported the Ministry in assessing the situation profile of youths nation-wide with the viable objective of designing, supporting and implementing projects that are income generating, that mainstream youth, that decrease youth marginalisation and that focus on job creation. Initial assessments led to the development of the National Youth policy. UNDP is working with the Ministry to organise and consult various youth groups in the formation and implementation of projects mainly in income generation and livelihoods, through a series of field visits countrywide. The results of these consultations will be presented with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) at the consultative group meeting in Paris during the month of May. The output should provide a roadmap for youth programming for the government and international agencies, which corresponds to the national objectives of the PRSP, as well as the local needs of youth throughout the country.

In February 2004, the UN Country Team designated UNDP the chair and focal point for youth and youth-related activities. The Resident Representative, who is also the DSRSG, and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for UNAMSIL is a vocal advocate of youth programming within the UNCT. The focal point for youth at UNDP is a Sierra Leonean national who is working to advance youth issues as a priority for the UN Country team. A permanent representative for UNAIDS is also currently working at UNDP on issues related to youth awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS. Although no reliable figures are currently available it is estimated that the infection rate among youth is as high as 8%. A recent UNICEF study found that 47% of adolescents do not know any of the methods of HIV transmission.

In addition to national efforts, the UN system is also engaged in regional approaches to this issue. In March 2005, the UN Country Teams from the MRU countries and Cote d'Ivoire met to discuss common challenges and promote regional approaches. Youth issues were identified as a key area requiring more attention. It was agreed that the UNCTs would increase efforts at advocacy to keep youth issues at the top of the agenda in order to increase the support of governments and international community to this issue; prepare a country concept paper to be used for dialogue with governments and

development partners in order to ensure that funding for programmes is available; and initiate consultations with ILO to seek advice and input.

### *Sierra Leone Interim Recovery Project*

An Interim-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) finalised in June 2001 under the co-ordination of the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning calls for a transitional phase with emphasis on: national security and good governance; re-launching the economy; and provision of basic social services to the most vulnerable social groups. UNDP's Interim Recovery Project (IRP) provides an immediate implementation of the governance priorities identified in the National Recovery Strategy.

The Interim Recovery Project includes a Youth Engagement and Job Opportunity Project (780,000 for youth activities), which aims to engage youth in training and community development. Interventions included support to a nation-wide youth gender sensitive network; workshops, development of training modules, training of trainers, competitive group income generating activities, organisational ability, sensitisation campaigns, financial management training, Civic education, HIV/AIDS and others. The youth project partners with ministries of Youth, Finance, Development, Education, the University, Youth and Women organisations, other NGOs and CBOs. In addition the project had the support of WB, DFID as well as other UN Agencies and UNAMSIL.

With a budget of 300,000 USD the job creation component funded 200 income-generating projects, with an emphasis on micro-credit. The project illustrates the importance for any activities on youth support to be linked or incorporated with the country's PRSP. Project documents give the impression that there are many institutions and strategies in place, backed up by many donor organisations assisting the country's post-conflict recovery efforts. As the need for concerted efforts in the field of youth is imperative, the PRSP offers an appropriate umbrella for coordinated efforts and interventions.

### *UNDP and youth in Liberia*

In 2000 UNDP and the government developed the first Country Cooperation Framework (CCF-1) for the period 2000-2002. This programme has been modified without a new agreement with the Liberian government, to adapt to the situation in country, stressing the importance of addressing the needs of youth and especially young former combatants as necessary for the transition process. A new Country Programme will be elaborated following elections at the end of this year.

From 1997 to 2001, several projects aimed at "youth"<sup>145</sup> were implemented by UNDP and other agencies. While the main beneficiaries of many programmes were "youth", it was only in 2003 that a UNDP youth focal point was created, and that programmes

---

<sup>145</sup> There is no clear definition of this group in the programmes profiled. According to the UNDP Youth focal point Liberia, it essentially comprises those between 15 and 30, but this is flexible. Interview Monrovia February 2005.

were evaluated to target the needs of this group independently. The dual role of the DSRS as Resident Representative of UNDP, as well as the experience of UNDP on the ground has meant that UNDP continues to play a key role.

The Results Focused Transitional Framework (RFTF) is the overarching reconstruction plan that sets out the priorities for the transitional administration. UNDP has been working to mainstream youth concerns into all areas of intervention, as there is no direct intervention for youth in the RFTF. UNDP Liberia has also been participating in youth-specific regional programmes, notably the Programme “Foundation for Africa’s Leadership” and the Mano River Union Youth Development Forum.<sup>146</sup>

With the inception of the DDR programme, youth-specific programmes were elaborated to focus on short-term training, skills development for employment and self-employment, and micro-finance initiatives. UNDP was one of the lead agencies in the Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) for the DDR programme, which was the largest programme to target young people affected by conflict and their communities. The most important programmes that address youth (and their communities) are implemented by the Community Based Reconstruction (CBR) Unit. The DDR and CBR programme look at specific needs of young people (education, psycho-social support, and livelihoods). However, “youth” are not treated as a separate beneficiary of programmes, but rather as a component within the larger context of their community.

## Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter has tried to provide an initial account of UNDP youth programmes and projects around the world. UNDP has built extensive institutional experience of working with youth and for the youth in many regions and countries, although youth is not one of its global practice areas. To date, however, this experience has not been based on articulated corporate guidelines and has evolved in a sporadic manner resulting in various pilot approaches and unevaluated interventions. Some general trends can be seen, however:

**Training.** Training of various kinds (skills development or leadership, regional, national or local) appears to be the most common and straightforward approach to youth affairs. However, despite the reported numbers of trained youth it is difficult to measure the impact. While training will be a relevant part of capacity building programmes for youth, attention should be paid to the training approach as a whole. Round tables, forums, global and regional workshops are not likely to yield significant results as they can only reach limited numbers of youth, and likely only youth from the elite. Efforts should be concentrated on training programmes linked to skills development and employment schemes. Training should be delivered and focused at the local level where the outreach is greater and the likelihood of impact is much higher.

---

<sup>146</sup> Country specific programs are based on the RFTF and focus on integrating youth into the existing framework, while regional programs work on a sector specific approach as well.

**Employment generation.** With world youth unemployment rates three times as high as adult rates,<sup>147</sup> employment generation is logical entry point for youth programmes either through public investments or private ones. However, policy responses require some fundamental shifts in the way policy makers view the challenge of providing jobs for young people. One of the most promising alternatives is the sustainable livelihoods approach, which provides a methodology for policy makers that recognises, and takes advantage of, the complex nature of youth livelihood systems.<sup>148</sup>

**Participation in governance.** In most African Countries, youth constitute a majority of electoral voters, yet the legislative parliaments have less than one percent youth representation. Young people continue to be relegated to the youth wing of political parties and used as agents to amass political power.<sup>149</sup> Africa's development rests not only on creating favourable conditions for young people's socio-economic development, but also on facilitating their participation in democratic governance. The challenge is to mobilise their energies and transform governance systems so that they feel included and represented.<sup>150</sup>

**Support to the development of national youth policies and strategies.** UNDP has been working with governments to develop national youth policies and to build the institutional capacity of ministries focusing on youth. Given UNDP's close relationship with national authorities, this is an important focus for UNDP.

**Partnerships with the private sector.** UNDP's partnerships with the private sector have a special importance with regard to youth employment objectives. Attempts to pilot such partnerships for the benefit of youth have already taken place in Kenya, Macedonia and Palestine.

**Developing entrepreneurship.** Another avenue for intervention is the development of youth enterprise and entrepreneurial capabilities. The latter are relevant to the majority of young people, who are operating outside formal economic and learning institutions. Enterprise capabilities are attitudes and behaviours that allow a person to adapt to changing circumstances by taking control and initiative.<sup>151</sup>

---

<sup>147</sup> Active labour market policies for youth employment in Asia and the Pacific: Traditional approaches and innovative programs Ruud Dorenbos, Deon Tanzer, Ilse Vossen NEI Labour and Education Rotterdam, January 2002

<sup>148</sup> Draft Concept note: Policy Development for Sustainable Youth Livelihoods

<sup>149</sup> In this respect the Rwandan experience is particularly interesting. Rwanda instituted a triple balloting system—consisting of a women's ballot, a youth ballot, and a general ballot—in which women and youth representatives are each guaranteed at least one-third of council representatives. (source: Great Lakes Policy Forum Meeting Report, December 4, 2003).

<sup>150</sup> Pre-ADF Symposium on Youth and Governance Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 10 October 2004, UN Economic Commission for Africa:  
[http://www.uneca.org/adf/presymposium/Youth\\_and\\_Governance\\_sym\\_aide\\_memoire.htm](http://www.uneca.org/adf/presymposium/Youth_and_Governance_sym_aide_memoire.htm)

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

### *Specific recommendations for UNDP*

In the light of the above, the following recommendations aim to institutionalise UNDP's efforts in youth and development, and thereby create a solid foundation for the elaboration of programmes in the future:

- A global HDR on youth and development should be prepared as a matter of priority, and Human Development Report Office should prepare a thematic guidance note about youth and national human developments. At the regional level, a regional African HDR could also focus attention on youth. At the national level, UNDP country offices should be encouraged to dedicate a national human development report to youth, where appropriate.
- If youth needs are to be addressed through a concerted and unified approach, it could be added as a crosscutting area to the UNDP practice areas. The upcoming UNDP Global Cooperation Framework, Regional Cooperation Frameworks, and ultimately the new UNDP Country Programmes, should explicitly include a programmatic approach to youth. Particularly relevant for Africa would be the inclusion of youth as a separate component in the upcoming third regional cooperation framework for Africa, or at least elaborated in a crosscutting expected output.
- UNDP country offices should be involved in the preparation and implementation of national youth policies, and link them with national development policy frameworks (where applicable with the PRSPs.) In some countries, country offices should consider appointing a youth focal point. This can be done in cooperation with UNV and other UN agencies, following the example in Sierra Leone.

## Bibliography

- Adolescent Programming In Conflict And Post-Conflict Situations, Case Studies, UNICEF, August 2004.
- Africa 2015 For an AIDS-free generation [www.africa2015.org/](http://www.africa2015.org/)
- African Network of Young Peace-builders, WEST AFRICAN YOUTH NETWORK [www.unoy.org](http://www.unoy.org)
- African Union, The Young Face Of NEPAD Children and Young People in the New Partnership for Africa's Development, Jointly published by: The African Union, The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, The New Partnership for Africa's Development Secretariat, The United Nations Children's Fund
- African Youth Foundation. [www.ayf.de/](http://www.ayf.de/)
- Appeal Target: CHF 318,690 (USD 218,670 or EUR 216,676) Programme Update No. 2, [www.reliefweb.org](http://www.reliefweb.org)
- August 22-24, 2004 the All-Ukrainian Youth Forum "Youth NGOs of Ukraine: developing partnership to achieve MDGs" <http://www.un.kiev.ua/en/pressroom/news/>
- Bulgaria, UNDP and Sport for Development and Peace, Fast Facts, December 2004
- Center for Conflict Resolution, The Africa In- country programme. <http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za/>
- Chansa-Barbara, Chalabesa. Presentation at Regional Gender Programme Stakeholders Workshop, Global Students Leadership Programme, 15-17 February, 2004, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- CIDA Peacebuilding Fund Approved Projects (1997-99) <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/>
- Common Country Assessment - Lesotho, United Nations, July 2000
- Commonwealth Youth Programme Evaluation Report, Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting 2003, Gaborone, Botswana
- Country Profiles on the Situation of Youth, <http://esa.un.org/socdev/nyin/country.htm>
- Cultivating the Next-Generation of African Leaders, Djibril Diallo: Co-president of the Pan African Youth Leadership Summit and is also the Director of the Communications Office of the Administrator, UNDP New York.
- Dikembe Mutombo Basketballer 'gets to the net' against HIV/AIDS and poverty, <http://www.undp.org/dpa/goodwill/youth.html>
- Dorenbos, Ruud, Deon Tanzer, Ilse Vossen, Active labour market policies for youth employment in Asia and the Pacific: Traditional approaches and innovative programmes NEI Labour and Education, Rotterdam, January 2002
- Equator Initiative Learning Exchange Programme, <http://www.undp.org/equatorinitiative>
- European Youth Forum Framework document to work towards the United Nations, Adopted by the General Assembly of the European Youth Forum 19-21 October - Brussels (Belgium)
- First Country Cooperation Framework For Senegal (1997-2001)
- Great Lakes: Gathering of leaders may signal new regional approach, NAIROBI, 15 Nov 2004 (IRIN) <http://www.irinnews.org/homepage.asp>
- GTZ, Youth and Small Arms-A Dangerous Combination, Documentation of an Expert Discussion on 8 November 2002, Eschborn, March 2003
- ICNYP, Newsletter, 1/2004, [http://www.youth-resources.net/icnyp\\_news/news\\_1\\_2004/](http://www.youth-resources.net/icnyp_news/news_1_2004/)
- IDEP 2004 spotlights *Youth: a new voice for the Millennium Development Goals*, <http://www.undp.org/idep/>

Infocus programme crises response and reconstruction, [www.ilo.org/public/english/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/index.htm)

International Council on National Youth Policy, [www.icnyp.net/](http://www.icnyp.net/) No 8

International Crisis Group. West Africa Project <http://www.crisisweb.org/home/index.cfm?l=1>

International Youth Foundation – Nokia-UNDP, Nokia, IYF, Pearson, and UNDP expand *Bridgait* in Philippines Doubling Number of Schools Served June 25, 2004 [www.iyfnet.org/](http://www.iyfnet.org/)

Lydia Bosire, Leo Metcalf – Youth Against AIDS, Clayton Lillienfeldt – Mediation & Transformation Practice, Ben Wikler – Student Global AIDS Campaign, For the Fourth World Youth Forum—Dakar, August 2001

Malloch Brown, Mark. UNDP Administrator on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, Youth – A New Voice for the Millennium Development Goals, 17 October 2004 <http://www.undp.org/dpa/statements/administ/2004/october/17oct04.html#>

Malloch Brown, Mark. Youth – A New Voice for the Millennium Development Goals: Message by UNDP Administrator on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October 2004, <http://www.undp.org/dpa/statements/administ/2004/october/17oct04.html#>

Mano River Countries - Complex Emergency Situation Report #2 (FY) 2003

MRU Peace Forum Secretariat, Report on the Mano River Union Peace Forum Inauguration, February 7th 2004, Hill Valley Guest House, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Netaid.org helps youth “Be the Change” in communities around the world [www.netaid.org/go/seebethechange](http://www.netaid.org/go/seebethechange),

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict, <http://www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict/English/ChildSoldiers.html>

PANA, UNDP elevates women’s skills for peace building, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (PANA), 19/11/2004 [www.panapress.com/](http://www.panapress.com/)

Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit, *Providing a Global Platform for Africa’s Next Generation of Leaders in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, 27-30 June 2004

Perspectives on Youth and Governance By *Muzwakhe Alfred Sigudhla* President SADC Youth Movement, Coordinator NEPAD Youth Summit 2005 “On the Occasion of ADFIV on Youth and Governance Symposium” 10-15 October 2004, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, IT for Kids, Helping Youth Cope at a Time of Crisis, <http://www.papp.undp.org/>

Project Document, Nurturing Future African Leaders

Randle, Wilma Jean Emanuel, Youth pledge fight for Millennium goal, *Africa Renewal*, Vol.18 #3 (October 2004), p 13 <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol18no3/183nepad/>

Second regional cooperation framework for Africa (2002-2006)

Security Council, 4577<sup>th</sup> Meeting\* Stability In Mano River Union Region Tied To Situation In Liberia, Security Council Workshop Concludes, Press Release SC/7456, 18/07/2002

Service as a Strategy for Children and Youth Prepared for the World Bank by Brett Alessi of Innovations in Civic Participation February 24, 2004

Stanford University, Michael Wald and Tia Martinez, Connected by 25: Improving the Life Chances of the Country’s Most Vulnerable 14-24 Year Olds, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Working Paper, November, 2003

Strategies for creating employment for urban youth, with specific reference to Africa by Richard Curtain Professional Associate National Institute for Governance University of Canberra, Australia, June 2004

Summary of Agreement between the UNDP and New Partnership for Africa (NEPAD)

The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, Report of the Secretary-General, April 1998

The Gambia gives youth a voice in battling HIV/AIDS  
<http://www.undp.org/dpa/frontpagearchive/2001/february/13feb01/#Anchor-A%20sh-26297>

The Liberian Post, The Mano River Tragedy, <http://liberian.tripod.com/Post.html>

U.S. Agency For International Development Bureau For Democracy, Conflict, And Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) Office Of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), [www.reliefweb.org](http://www.reliefweb.org)

UNDAF Botswana 2003 – 2007

UNDP Botswana Youth Programme, <http://www.unbotswana.org/bw/undp/index.html>

UNDP First Country Cooperation Framework For Samoa (1997-2001)

UNDP First Global Country Cooperation Framework (1997-2000)

UNDP <http://www.un-az.org/undp/news/youthforum.php>

UNDP in Africa, Supporting Africa as it Meets the Challenges of 21st Century, May 2004.

UNDP in Kosovo, Youth Post-Conflict Participation Project [www.undp.org/](http://www.undp.org/)

UNDP in Papua Guinea, Bougainville Rehabilitation and Reconstruction and Development Project [www.undp.org/](http://www.undp.org/)

UNDP News, October 2001, Women Global Student, Young Women Changing The Way The World Works.

UNDP Second global cooperation framework, 2001-2003

UNDP South Africa, Holistic Response To HIV/AIDS and Poverty [www.undp.org/](http://www.undp.org/)

UNDP, 15 November 1999, UNDP: Country Cooperation Frameworks And Related Matters First Country Cooperation Framework For Liberia, January 2000

UNDP, Albania, Building Community Based Policing Through: Awareness Education, Support To Security Sector Reform Programme, June 23, 2004

UNDP, Choices Magazine, Youth for the MDGs, September 2004 [www.undp.org/](http://www.undp.org/)

UNDP, Croatian Human Development Report on Youth  
[http://www.undp.hr/en/areas/democratic/nhdr\\_2002.html](http://www.undp.hr/en/areas/democratic/nhdr_2002.html),

UNDP, International Day for Eradication of Poverty 2004 spotlights *Youth: a new voice for the Millennium Development Goals* [www.undp.org/](http://www.undp.org/)

UNDP, Lithuania, Youth Friendly Services in Lithuania, February 2003

UNDP, Press Release, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2004, “Pan African Youth Leadership Summit, 27<sup>th</sup> – 1st July 2004, Dakar, Senegal” <http://www.africa2015.org/youthsummit.html/>

UNDP, Project Document, Sierra Leone Interim Recovery Project, Date: October 2002

UNDP, Reaching out to Youth in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS, Tajikistan, A Country on the Move, April 2003

UNDP, Tajikistan, Communities Programme, Promoting Prosperous Communities

UNICEF, Map Of Programmes For Adolescent Participation During Conflict And Post-Conflict Situations, September 2003

UNICEF: At a glance: Guatemala [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/guatemala\\_1938.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/guatemala_1938.html)

United Nations, Liberia: Common Country Assessment, 1999



- United Nations, Youth—A Young Voice For The Achievement Of The Millennium Development Goals, UN Week In Albania.
- United Nations. The global situation of young people, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/wyr/>
- United Nations. World Youth Report 2003:
- University of Cape Town, South Africa: Good Governance, Security and Disarmament: The Challenge of Demilitarisation in Africa Presented at the International Conference on Leadership Challenges of Demilitarisation in Africa, Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, Africa Leadership Forum and UNDP, Arusha, 22-24 July 1998. Updated August 1998.
- UNV, In FACT, UN Volunteers and Youth, November 2004 <http://www.unv.org/>
- UNV, News Release UNV, UNCCD, UNDP engage Cape Verdean UN Volunteers to fight desertification, BONN, 8 May 2003 [http://www.unv.org/news\\_media/index.htm/](http://www.unv.org/news_media/index.htm/)
- UNV, United Nations Volunteers Report of the Administrator Annual session 2004 14-23 June 2004, Geneva
- USAID, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (Dcha) Office Of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), *Mano River Countries (Guinea, Liberia, And Sierra Leone) – Complex Emergency*, Situation Report #3, Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 June 12, 2002
- West Africa Mano River Sub-Region Appeal No. 01.29/2003 Programme Update No. 2. Appeal No. 01.29/2003
- World Bank, Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit, Social Development Department Dissemination Notes, Child Soldiers: Prevention, Demobilization and Reintegration, May 2002, Number 3
- YMCA, National Youth Policies, A working document from the point of view of "non-formal education" youth organizations. World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, World Young Women's Christian Association, World Organization of the Scout Movement, World Association of Girl Guides & Girl Scouts, International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies, The International Award Association.
- Youth Against AIDS. Youth and HIV/AIDS: Choices, Leadership, and Survival [www.whatudo.org/p01-learn/wyf.pdf](http://www.whatudo.org/p01-learn/wyf.pdf)
- Youth And The Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation Interim Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group for Youth and the MDGs, November 2004

## **Review of UN system and other programming**

---

*We became adults when we went to fight, but then when we went back home we were still treated like children. I was adult enough to learn to kill, but not adult enough for my father to let me get a driver's license.*

*- Demobilised soldier in Eastern Congo*

How do other UN and international organisations approach youth in conflict? What are their rationales and mandates for action, and what have they done so far? What can be learned from this work?

Desk and field research with a number of international organisations working in conflict, post-conflict and/or transition and development settings reveals significant action on behalf of and with youth affected by violent conflict. However, motivations and mandates guiding this action vary greatly, and there is no clear consensus on why it is important and urgent to work with youth or how best to do it. International cooperation to expand promising practices is highly limited, and humanitarian and development action with youth in and after violent conflict remains highly under-supported and inconsistent.

The following is a limited mapping of some of these efforts, outlining a range of achievements, gaps and dynamics involved with humanitarian, reconstruction and development initiatives with youth. It provides a sampling of the rationales behind, approaches to and outcomes of this work, highlighting specific projects and paying particular attention to education, DDR, youth employment and participation. A focus on efforts in West Africa offers a regional perspective as informed by field visits with agencies operating in Dakar, Senegal, Monrovia, Liberia and Freetown, Sierra Leone. Although this review did not involve the evaluation of programmes, some lessons to be learned are also shared, as derived from available information.

Key findings reveal that effective work with youth affected by violent conflict is essential and achievable and must be youth-driven and youth-informed. A diverse set of programme results show progress in many areas, which should be expanded. Both mainstreamed and targeted approaches to supporting youth that account for age, gender and other differences are needed. They should be informed by a comprehensive framework for action that accounts for the diverse circumstances of youth and ensures all sectors of response are integrated across phases of conflict and recovery. Many challenges remain to bridge gaps in policy and practice, improve coordination between humanitarian and development actors and increase funding for work with youth. These and other barriers continue to undermine youth survival, capacities and roles, and thereby, the short- and long-term well-being of their entire societies.

### **West Africa Focus: Sierra Leone and Liberia**

Although this is a global review, a focus on West Africa provides important perspectives on the relationship between youth and conflict and opportunities for learning and action. In recent decades, the West Africa region has experienced the direct

effects of violent conflict, particularly in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea. These areas have large youth populations, which combined with other factors such as unemployment, are associated with an increased risk of armed conflict.<sup>152</sup> With life expectancies declining, in part due to the spread of HIV/AIDS, the roles of youth 15-24 in creating, surviving and recovering from war are critical. Ongoing gender divides also continue to diminish prospects for conflict prevention and recovery.<sup>153</sup>

Some governments in the region have shown a strong interest in addressing youth concerns, including Senegal, as have UNDP Resident Representatives. The region has also shown leadership in addressing issues facing children and armed conflict, including by hosting an international conference in Accra, Ghana, and through civil society youth activism. In conflict-affected areas, although many gaps remain, strong actions have been taken to address youth concerns, presenting important lessons to be learned and adapted to other contexts. Thus, given ongoing needs, accomplishments to date and opportunities for improvement, West Africa is a particular focus of learning and targeted action.

The following short profiles of the situation of youth in Sierra Leone and Liberia reveal patterns in youth experiences of war. In both cases, it is generally considered that the political and social marginalisation and manipulation of youth was central to the perpetration of violent conflict. In the immediate post-conflict periods, DDR programmes were and are critical to establishing a level of security but do not do enough to help all young people begin to rebuild their lives; they particularly neglected females. Comprehensive investment in young people's education, health, livelihood and leadership has not followed. Young people suffer ongoing rights abuses and degradation, which they say are root causes of war in the region. Overall, youth are viewed largely as problems rather than as essential actors for sustained peace and development.

Many barriers remain in establishing the will, means and systems to support youth protection and development in armed conflict and post-conflict. The Sierra Leone and Liberia examples represent critical challenges involved with engaging fledgling government structures to work effectively with youth in post-conflict environments. They also reveal the urgent need to improve connections between, and expand and sustain humanitarian and development support for youth in ways that build youth capacities and leadership. Highlights of programming examples from the region described below show important progress, but much more action is needed.

---

<sup>152</sup> See: Urdal, Henrik, *The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950-2000*, Social Development Papers, Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction, The World Bank, Paper No. 14, July 2004.

<sup>153</sup> See the forthcoming: Lowicki-Zucca, Jane, *Gender, Youth and Armed Conflict*, World Youth Report 2005, UN DESA, 2005.

## A. Sierra Leone

With life expectancy at 34<sup>154</sup>, Sierra Leone is predominantly young; approximately 26 percent of the population is between the ages of 15 and 29.<sup>155</sup> Youth and their concerns were central to the nearly 10-year civil war that ended officially in 1999. The government's failure to provide free education and other basic support was a rallying cry attracting many young people to join the rebel movement in Sierra Leone. Young people's hopes and dreams of changing their society for the better, however, were ultimately turned against them. Many were manipulated and indoctrinated to wage a bloody war, squelching the voices of thousands of others who sought non-violent solutions. Despite young people's roles in the conflict as perpetrators, victims and active survivors, however, adult decision-makers have not prioritised comprehensive support for youth capacities to ensure peace and improve the well-being of all in society over time.<sup>156</sup>

The DDR arguably represented the largest youth-focused programme in post-conflict Sierra Leone. It provided those demobilising with an immediate alternative to fighting and a new civilian identity, including as students. However, among other problems, an initial cash-for-weapons approach swelled the ranks of DDR participants without a concomitant swelling of programme resources, and many females were left out. Poorly resourced DDR programmes resulted in many areas, leaving participants angry, frustrated and exposed to further exploitation and abuse. Although efforts were made to simultaneously support the reintegration and recovery of the majority of other youth who were not associated with fighting forces, these efforts paled in comparison, creating additional divisions and competition among young people over limited resources.<sup>157</sup>

Two years after national elections and the end of the DDR programme, youth are seen less as an immediate threat to stability and more as a "time bomb waiting to explode,"<sup>158</sup> representing a potential for future conflict. Large numbers of youth remain idle and with limited prospects. Young people continue to suffer daily assaults on their well-being and call for improved youth access to education, employment, housing, social services and decision-making processes.

With little access to land, education or employment, there is widespread dissatisfaction among youth who have not benefited from the "peace dividend." Although not confirmed through this research, significant numbers of young Sierra Leoneans with few prospects at home are believed to have joined the fighting in nearby Ivory Coast over the past year. Lack of reintegration support has also led to widespread sexual abuse

---

<sup>154</sup> UNDP Human Development Report 2004, Human Development Index, based on 2002 statistics.

<sup>155</sup> See: [www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbpyr.html](http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbpyr.html).

<sup>156</sup> See: Lowicki, Jane and Allison Anderson Pillsbury, *Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone*, WCRWC, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> During UNDP consultant research interviews in Sierra Leone, many representatives of national and international organizations working with youth used this expression, most often to refer to the high level of unemployment, lack of education and idleness of large numbers of youth in urban settings.

and exploitation, particularly of girls and young women. Some of the females left out of the DDR were forced to turn to sex work to survive, and others remained with their captors, unable to return home.<sup>159</sup> With few other options, many young males have also been pulled into exploitative labour in diamond mines.

As Sierra Leone transitions from relief and recovery to development, major gaps remain in support to youth. Although international and local agencies focus attention on youth through an array of programmes, ranging from adult and peace education to micro-credit, much more is needed. In 2004, almost no funds were allocated for education, despite it being a top priority for young people who have not had access to schooling for most of their lives.<sup>160</sup> Youth-focused education is especially under-supported. Most young people were unable to finish primary school and either require help catching up and/or access to a range of other skills and learning opportunities that they view as critical to their protection and well-being.<sup>161</sup>

UNDP is working with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS) to incorporate youth issues into the PRSP to provide an operational framework for addressing youth needs that will be implemented by the GOSL and the UN Country Team. With the creation of the MOYS in 2002, youth organisations found a receptive partner in its new Minister, Dr. Dennis Bright, a former civil society leader, who is a strong advocate for youth. They worked together to complete and pass a new National Youth Policy that youth groups and others had previously developed. However, the Ministry's capacity to support youth on a large scale has been limited by several factors. The MOYS has been poorly resourced, understaffed and has not had an independent operating budget. Without a substantial increase in donor commitment to youth in Sierra Leone, on its own, the Ministry is unable to fill the gap. Many within the GOSL also require a better understanding of youth issues and how to approach them across all ministries and programmes. Dr. Bright explained, "Lack of equipment and finances is just one part of the problem. Recently at a meeting with government colleagues, all acknowledged that there was a problem with youth. However, they believed the problem was that youth 'just don't listen to or respect their elders anymore.' We still have a lot of work to do."<sup>162</sup>

Despite these barriers, the MOYS has been an important focal point for youth interaction with the government, creating opportunities for trust-building and partnerships. Regular consultation with youth across the country has also generated ideas for both macro and micro approaches to youth support, which should be further pursued.

---

<sup>159</sup> Lowicki, Jane and Anderson Pillsbury, *Precious Resources*, *op cit*.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*. Hundreds of youth interviewed by their peers named lack of education as their top concern in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

<sup>161</sup> UNDP consultant interview with Dennis Johnson, UN OCHA, Nairobi, Kenya, February 2005.

<sup>162</sup> UNDP consultant interview with MOYS, Dr. Dennis Bright, Sierra Leone, February 2005.

## B. Liberia

In Liberia, 28 percent of the population is between 15 and 29 years old,<sup>163</sup> and life expectancy is 47.7 years.<sup>164</sup> Like in Sierra Leone, fighting forces relied heavily on the involvement of youth to fuel more than 10 years of intermittent civil war, which ended most recently in 2003. The Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme (DDRRP) is also arguably the largest youth-focused programme supported by the international community in post-conflict Liberia. Although there were opportunities to learn from experiences in neighbouring Sierra Leone, DDRRP in Liberia was similarly overenrolled and under-resourced, creating barriers to female participants despite their being accounted for in planning. The DDRRP has helped achieve security and facilitate a short-term transition, but security challenges remain, and sustained support for community reintegration is needed. Rural communities facing destroyed infrastructure are unable to support full reintegration, and many of the country's youth live in the capital of Monrovia.

The disarmament and demobilisation component of the DDRRP was officially completed at the end of 2004, while the 3-year reintegration component is ongoing. Over 100,000 combatants have been officially demobilised. However, youth are still viewed as a security risk, and there is strong concern to keep them occupied in the months leading up to elections in November 2005 in order to ensure stability in the transition. With little support, it is feared that demobilised youth and potentially others will return to fighting. One young Monrovia explained, "I never thought about fighting, and I still don't want to. But next time, if a war comes round, I will join up... at worst I can participate in the [DDRR] programme afterwards."<sup>165</sup>

In collaboration with the international community, Liberia's transitional government undertook an assessment of the country's needs for security, humanitarian assistance, recovery and reconstruction for the two-year transition period 2004-2005. The Results Focused Transitional Framework was produced and used to convene a reconstruction conference on Liberia in the USA in February 2004. It serves as the blueprint for longer-term recovery and reconstruction. All development actions are meant to conform to this document in order to facilitate coordination between international agencies and the transitional government. However, most international agencies remain focused on short-term programming and humanitarian interventions given concerns over the limited capacity and tenure of the transitional Liberian government and a lack of political will to address youth concerns. As one senior US Diplomat stated, "Once the people of Liberia have chosen their own leaders and their own form of government, then we will do everything possible to support them."<sup>166</sup>

---

<sup>163</sup> See: [www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbpyr.html](http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbpyr.html).

<sup>164</sup> *Liberian Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme, Strategy and Implementation Framework - Draft*, Interim Secretariat (UNDP, UNMIL, World Bank, USAID, UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHA, World Vision), Monrovia, October 31, 2003, p. 10.

<sup>165</sup> UNDP consultant interview, Monrovia, Liberia, February 2005.

<sup>166</sup> UNDP consultant interview with US Embassy staff, Monrovia, Liberia, February 2005.

In the meantime, youth could be further supported to ensure their non-violent participation in the elections and to advocate for a systematic commitment to youth by the new government. Education and other programmes that support their roles are also important components for transitioning to a brighter future.

## International agency work on youth and violent conflict

Although many organisations – international, national, regional and local – are undertaking work with youth affected by violent conflict, time and resources limited the scope of this review. The agencies profiled below are a sample of the many international groups working with youth in a variety of sectors in conflict-affected areas. A host of others are doing important work with youth, such as USBPRM, Danida, DFID, USDOL, CIDA, SV, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNHABITAT, Christian Children’s Fund, the International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Plan International, Save the Children and Search for Common Ground. References to some of this work may be found in the accompanying bibliography.

Carving out attention to youth as a distinct, yet highly diverse social group within dynamic conflict and post-conflict environments is a fundamental challenge. As the examples below show, support for youth is both mainstreamed and targeted. Youth are at times key beneficiaries of programmes with larger programmatic objectives, serving multiple populations. Attention to youth in these programmes may be intentional or incidental. Targeted “youth programmes” also exist, where youth as a specific sub-group are the focal point for action, but are much less frequent.

International activism and support for youth ultimately falls under many headings, reflecting a wide range of institutional mandates, interests and funding streams, as well as the immense diversity of experiences that “youth” represent. Support for “youth programming” per se is not the norm. For example, youth benefit from child protection, women’s empowerment, HIV/AIDS, education or DDR programmes. Youth may qualify for support as children, girls, women, former adult or child soldiers, AIDS orphans, refugees, unaccompanied minors, heads of household, young mothers and other groups. Intended impacts range from conflict prevention, peace and security, to health, psychosocial recovery and economic development. At the same time, “youth programming,” takes many forms, ranging from civic participation initiatives and peace-building, to vocational and life skills training and peer-to-peer outreach for HIV/AIDS prevention.

Information on the mandates, policies and initiatives of nine United Nations agencies, IFIs, governmental donor and international NGOs is provided below. Some of their work focuses mainly on youth who are also considered to be children or adolescents under 18, according to the international legal definition of children established by the CRC. Others work with both adolescents and young adults. Key themes emerged which require further discussion and action, including the need for improved understanding about the range of rationales for working with youth affected by armed conflict and the development of a comprehensive framework for action with youth that guides effective, coordinated responses. Rationales for work with youth go beyond the need to prevent their involvement in armed conflict or to support their roles as peace builders. They also

include the need to support a diverse range of other roles young people play in their daily survival and development and that of others given their age and stage in life. Additional cooperation is also needed between humanitarian and development actors to ensure holistic attention to youth across all sectors of programming and cycles of conflict, post-conflict and development. Improved cooperation must also be matched with increased funding for youth programming, emphasising capacity-building and leadership development.

## **A. United Nations Agencies**

### **UNICEF**

#### ***Background and mandate for engaging youth: a focus on adolescents***

UNICEF's conceptual framework for the development of policy and programmes for adolescents is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC identifies the special abilities and rights of children in this age group and urges continued and strengthened efforts for their protection so that they may develop to their full potential. In line with this and other relevant international legal and ethical standards, UNICEF's programmatic framework for working with adolescents aims to meet the targets and objectives articulated in the Millennium Development Goals as well as "World Fit for Children" represented in UNICEF's strategic plan.

To give special attention to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of adolescents' rights, UNICEF established the Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Unit at headquarters in 2002. One of the main goals of the Unit is to provide leadership, guidance and direction to UNICEF Country Programmes that are working with partners to create cross-sectoral approaches to adolescent development and participation.

UNICEF's overall adolescent agenda focuses on initiatives to empower adolescents to fulfil their potential and participate in, as well as contribute to, their societies. Consequently, UNICEF has adopted a human rights-based approach to programming for adolescents that identifies the protective factors for reducing risk-taking behaviours of adolescents and finds new ways to harness their resilience, strength and positive energy in programming efforts. This approach is a deliberate shift from traditional programming, which focused only on the problems of adolescents.

The Unit's strategies for adolescent programming include:

- Internal and external advocacy to ensure adolescent development and participation,
- Capacity building of UNICEF staff, government counterparts and partners to enable them to promote a positive vision of adolescents and promote/implement a rights-based framework for programming,
- Collection and implementation of best practices and learning materials within and outside UNICEF,
- Creation and implementation of monitoring and evaluation indicators and
- Achievement of meaningful, gender-sensitive participation of adolescents in order to scale-up activities at the country level.



### *Programmatic approaches*

Since its inception, UNICEF's mandate has involved the rapid response to humanitarian crises- a commitment that is reflected in UNICEF's Core Commitments to Children in Emergencies. UNICEF provides assistance before, during and after a conflict, to protect and support children, families, communities and governments.

In unstable situations, particularly conflict, adolescents and young people face multiple risks and may be targeted for violence, abuse and exploitation. Girls are particularly vulnerable. Yet, humanitarian assistance - including post-conflict and reintegration programming- has typically focused on meeting the survival needs of young children, neglecting those of the adolescent population. During emergencies, adolescent girls and boys are frequently denied their rights to education, vocational training, psychosocial support, health care and safe water. Only recently have adolescent issues been brought to the forefront of programming – due in part to the framework created by the rights-based approach to programming.

Considering that adolescents comprise a significant portion of countries in crisis as well as the enormous capacities possessed by adolescents to play a key role in community development and peace-building, UNICEF focuses its humanitarian programmatic efforts on involving adolescents in efforts to protect, enable and empower young people to take positive action in their family, school and community life. UNICEF's work in emergencies brings adolescents to the forefront of relief and reconstruction and programming in conflict and post-conflict situation globally. UNICEF believes that if adolescents' rights are not taken into consideration from programme inception, transition from emergency response to developmental programming will not take place. Consultation with children, and programming which involves children as partners, are increasingly becoming the norm in UNICEF programmes of cooperation.

Interventions in UNICEF's core programme areas of education, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS and child protection include:

- Educational, vocational and life skills training in emergencies
- Back-to-school campaigns
- Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of former child soldiers
- HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention
- Youth Friendly Health Services
- Psychosocial and peer-to-peer support
- Media, broadcasting and communications
- Mine risk education
- Peace-building and conflict resolution
- Post-conflict reconciliation and truth-seeking
- Protection from and prevention against sexual violence, including the provision of care and support
- Legislative reform
- Sports for development
- Involvement of adolescents in research on the impact of armed conflict on children and adolescents,

- Water, environment and sanitation service rehabilitation

### *Programming examples*

In **Sierra Leone**, UNICEF worked with the government and partners to protect adolescents' participated in the country's truth and reconciliation commission - contributing to the Commission's recommendations in post-conflict Sierra Leone. A first ever child-friendly version of the Truth and Reconciliation Report was subsequently presented to the President. UNICEF **Liberia** supported a youth/children's parliament to ensure the active involvement of young people in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decisions that affect them. Young people, both in and out of school, selected the parliament. The parliament organised a one-day Child Rights Symposium, bringing together about 75 young people from Monrovia and surrounding areas. In preparation for upcoming elections, UNICEF is also supporting the parliament to advance youth participation in political dialogue and to ensure the active participation of youth and children in national and community development efforts. In addition, UNICEF supported adolescent and youth education with an Accelerated Learning Programme undertaken in collaboration with partners to capture groups who had been unable to access education facilities during the war.

Elsewhere, in **Somalia**, UNICEF supported a large-scale training programme to train members of more than 400 youth groups in leadership and organisational development (LOD) skills. The LOD training focuses on strengthening these groups' capacity so they are capable of contributing effectively to development processes and, through this, have an impact as an interest group on the social, economic and cultural development of their country. In **South Sudan** an evaluation of the demobilisation project was undertaken seeking views from a wide range of stakeholders including children themselves. Children and siblings of children who had been demobilised were involved in the process. In **Uganda**, adolescents conducted, together with NGOs, a uniquely revealing assessment of the impact of conflict on young children. In **Cote D'Ivoire**, UNICEF has been supporting the training of peer educators for the prevention of HIV/AIDS and STIs among youth from 15-24 years of age. In **Albania**, young people were supported to operate their own television programme as a forum for debate on child rights and social issues. In the **Occupied Palestinian Territory**, a Child Friendly Cities framework is being piloted in Jenin, Jericho, Gaza city and Rafah. Children's Municipal Councils have been set up in each of the cities to give young people an opportunity to plan and implement activities that will help improve and rebuild community life. In **Afghanistan**, UNICEF and NGO partners supported a community-based demobilisation and reintegration programme for child soldiers.

### *Recent developments*

i) UNICEF in nearly all conflict countries plays a strong role in the collection, processing and reporting of information used in advocacy efforts related to adolescents. This information is also used to inform programming by documenting best practice. The recently published *Impact of Conflict on Women and Girls in West and Central Africa and the UNICEF Response* details the special needs of adolescent girls in this region in programming, particularly in processes of reintegration and rehabilitation. *Adolescent*

*Programming in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations* published in 2004 too represents a breakthrough in programming with and for adolescents as it examines case studies of adolescent programming in conflict and post-conflict around the world. The publication provides valuable insights into innovative strategies to engage adolescents during humanitarian crises in a range of programme activities, including in community development and peace building.

ii) Following UNICEF's sub-regional workshop (Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana) in West Africa on peace building in 2004, a two-year project entitled '**Leadership for Human Security: Peace Building Project**' has been launched to promote sustainable peace and stability in the West African sub-region. The project seeks to promote and strengthen social and institutional leadership capacities to address and manage conflict through non-violence. The project targets the leadership capacity of youth and children's groups in peace-building activities in particular. Advocacy and communications activities include a child- and youth-run high-impact mass media campaign targeting their peers with information and spurring dialogue on conflict management and peace building. Needs assessments will be conducted for the development of skills-based modules and training materials on conflict management, and information will be collected on the impact of violent conflict on children, youth and women. Activities will support the strengthening of networks, collaborations and partnerships between decision-makers and youth, civil society and the media, and among youth groups.

## **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

### ***Background and mandate for engaging youth***

UNHCR is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its principle role is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. UNHCR supports short- and longer-term activities in collaboration with a range of implementing partners, including to address the specific needs of youth through education, health, family tracing, protection and other programmes.

Children under 18 make up approximately half of the world's refugee population. Like UNICEF, UNHCR focuses its attention to youth on the adolescents under age 18 among them. In many policy documents, the terms "youth" and "children" are used interchangeably. At the same time, UNHCR is increasingly acknowledging the need to address the distinct circumstances of older youth, or young adults. One UNHCR publication on refugee youth notes that the particular needs of youth risk being overlooked since they overlap with those of adults.<sup>167</sup>

Refugee young people face serious risks. They often arrive in asylum countries alone (unaccompanied minors) without the vital protection of their family or other caretakers.

---

<sup>167</sup> See *UNHCR and Refugee Youth*, publication for World Refugee Day 2003 on USA for UNHCR website: <http://www.unrefugees.org/usafornhcr/uploadedfiles/Intro.pdf>.

They are particularly vulnerable to physical attack, sexual and economic exploitation, forced military recruitment and human trafficking. Education efforts for refugees still focus on primary education for primary school-aged children, and drop-out rates are high, particularly for girls.<sup>168</sup> Young people may be forced to spend long periods in refugee camps during formative years with little to do. Idleness increases their vulnerability to a wide range of abuses and undermines their current and future prospects for development and community participation.

UNHCR seeks to mainstream child and adolescent issues into its overall protection and assistance activities.<sup>169</sup> UNHCR's global strategy includes the needs of adolescents among its priority issues for prevention and response. These priority issues include: separation, sexual exploitation, abuse and violence, military recruitment, education, specific needs of adolescents, and specific issues requiring particular attention in a given region.

UNHCR recognises the importance of refugee participation in identifying and designing programmes that enhance the protection of refugee children. It advocates for the use of a "community development approach to ensure that limited resources are effectively utilised."<sup>170</sup> UNHCR also initiated and sponsored the seminal adolescent- and youth-led research and advocacy with the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children on young people's concerns in and after armed conflict and ways forward.<sup>171</sup>

### ***UNHCR and youth education***

UNHCR supports a range of education opportunities for refugee children and youth. However, the provision of primary education is prioritised. UNHCR participated in a Global Education Survey revealing enormous gaps in education opportunities for adolescents and youth, especially females.<sup>172</sup> Most refugee young people have not completed primary school, and those that do find few opportunities to go on to secondary or tertiary education. At times, secondary and tertiary education, vocational skills training and apprenticeships are available to young people, but they do not meet the vast need.

To help address this gap, the former High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata worked to establish an independent fund for refugee and post-primary education. In 2000, the Refugee Education Trust was launched. RET is currently funding post-primary education projects in Pakistan, Tanzania, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Uganda. UNHCR was also involved in the establishment of the Inter-Agency Network for

---

<sup>168</sup> For further information see *Supporting Disadvantaged Youth Around the World*, UNHCR, November 2002; [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org).

<sup>169</sup> Most UNHCR documents and officials refer to "adolescents" rather than "youth." Information from *Summary Note on UNHCR's Strategy and Activities concerning Refugee Children*, UNHCR, May 2002; [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch).

<sup>170</sup> *Summary Note on UNHCR's Strategy and Activities concerning Refugee Children*, UNHCR, May 2002; [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch).

<sup>171</sup> See bibliography for reports by Lowicki and Anderson Pillsbury, [www.womenscommission.org](http://www.womenscommission.org).

<sup>172</sup> See: Bethke, Lynne, *Global Survey on Education in Emergencies*, WCRWC, USA, February 2004.

Education in Emergencies (INEE). Through a highly consultative process, INEE developed and recently launched the first-ever Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies (MSEE). The MSEE support the goals of Education for All and contain guidance notes for their application with youth.

UNHCR also developed a Peace Education Programme supporting formal and non-formal education, with a specific component for out-of-school youth. The programme has been extended to secondary schools in Kenya and Liberia and through non-formal education initiatives in Guinea, Liberia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

### *UNHCR in Sierra Leone*

Although UNHCR's refugee **repatriation and reintegration support** in Sierra Leone is not a youth programme per se, it profoundly affects young people, who comprised large numbers of refugee and displaced populations. Many of these people have returned to their communities or other parts of Sierra Leone and continue to face major challenges reintegrating, including gaining access to education and employment. To address the situation, UNHCR focuses on four broad categories of repatriation and reintegration support: transport/logistics/non-food items; emergency rehabilitation; community empowerment; and national recovery, (a UNHCR sub-project). UNHCR also works with Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone.

UNHCR has worked with a range of NGOs in Sierra Leone to promote healthy behaviours by **focusing on sport and psychosocial wellbeing**. The international NGO Right to Play works with UNHCR in the Bo, Kenema and Kailahun regions of Sierra Leone to provide regular sport and play activities for refugees, IDPs and their communities. Right to Play organises sports programmes with youth to “[provide them with] a release from the horrors of the past; keep young people occupied; and give them confidence to re-start their lives.”<sup>173</sup> Sports programmes in UNHCR camps are also used to promote school attendance, to communicate health messages and promote healthy behaviours, especially related to HIV/AIDS prevention. They reportedly show strong results as an effective method of communication among refugee youth, and as a means of increasing self-confidence among them.<sup>174</sup>

UNHCR has also worked with the Norwegian Refugee Council to support vocational training programmes with youth, and with War Child on psychosocial programming with youth in several sites throughout the country. ICRC works with UNHCR to help with family tracing and reunification, including with youth. UNHCR is planning to

---

<sup>173</sup> UNDP consultant interviews with Right to Play, Sierra Leone, February 2005.

<sup>174</sup> UNDP consultant interviews with UNESCO, Right To Play and UNHCR, Sierra Leone, February 2005. It should also be noted that 2005 has been declared as the year of Sports for Development for UN agencies. According to a report from the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, “Sports programmes serve as an effective tool for social mobilisation, supporting health activities such as HIV/AIDS education and immunisation campaigns, [as well as] a significant economic force, providing employment and contributing to local development.” See: *Toward Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, United Nations, 2003, see: executive summary.

phase out their operations in Sierra Leone at the end of 2005 to be replaced by INGOs and UNDP.

An **Adult Education and Community Development programme** is implemented by the Finnish Refugee Council at UNHCR sites throughout Sierra Leone. It supports returnees to rebuild their lives and raise their standard of living and self-esteem through increased literacy, numeracy and ability to critically analyse the environment. Young adults are among the participants. The focus of the programme is to increase literacy and use it as a tool for peace, development and poverty reduction. Functional adult literacy training is provided, where participants learn and practically apply basic literacy and numeracy skills through training in a number of areas, including health, family planning, civil rights, conflict management and small business skills.<sup>175</sup>

### **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**

The ILO is working to strengthen the capacity of governments and social partners to address youth employment problems globally, including in areas affected by armed conflict. According to the ILO, “political, economic and socio-cultural transformations of recent times have affected young people, further exposing the vulnerability that is inherent in the transition from childhood to adulthood.”<sup>176</sup> As mentioned, the ILO hosts the Youth Employment Network and is attempting to operationalise activities in the field.

Another key tool of the ILO is “policy-oriented research” on ways to more effectively integrate youth into education and work. This involves:

- documenting successful programmes for reducing the number of school dropouts and helping them return to school;
- identifying innovative pathways from school to work, including better linkages between initial education, training and work experience, and building bridges between schools and employers;
- evaluating and drawing lessons from labour market programmes for unemployed young women and men;
- providing policy advice and technical support to governments on how to develop “second-chance” schemes for young school dropouts;
- raising awareness of successful strategies to combat youth marginalisation and unemployment;
- setting up demonstration projects/pilot activities that combine training institutions and enterprises to provide apprenticeship, mentoring or work experience for young persons.<sup>177</sup>

---

<sup>175</sup> UNDP consultant interview with Finnish Refugee Council, Freetown, Sierra Leone, February 2005. The Norwegian Refugee Council also worked on complimentary programmes in Sierra Leone until end 2004.

<sup>176</sup> See: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org).

<sup>177</sup> See: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/youth/progr.htm>.

## **World Health Organisation (WHO)**

### ***Background and mandate for working with children and adolescents***

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) objective, as set out in its constitution, is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. WHO defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. In 1995, WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF convened a study group on programming for adolescent health, highlighting that many of the behavioural patterns acquired during adolescence will last a lifetime, that these behaviours stem primarily from the social environment and that these conditions constrain efforts to improve the health and well-being of adolescents.

The WHO's Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development (CAH) strives for a world in which adolescents are able to: acquire the information; build the skills; access the health services; and live in the supportive environment they need for their health and development. In post-conflict environments such as Sierra Leone and Liberia, WHO supports trauma counseling and psychiatric care to youth affected by violent conflict.

### ***WHO support to the Sierra Leonean Ministry of Health***

WHO has worked with the Ministry of Health to gather comprehensive data on the mental health of Sierra Leone's youth population. Results from surveys completed throughout Sierra Leone in 2002 indicate that more than 90 percent of youth have had a significant traumatic exposure, 50-75 percent of the sample have moderate symptoms, while 15-25 percent of them score for more severe symptoms. It is estimated that about 5-10 percent of young people might need mental health interventions or at least a qualified evaluation to explore their needs. Many youth with war-related stress reactions may not need specific individual treatment, but may benefit from "social recovery interventions," which focus on community and family support, collective rituals and religious support.<sup>178</sup>

### ***WHO support to Liberia in community mental health***

During September 2004, a general emergency strategy for mental health was developed through collaboration between WHO (the Senior Mental Health Advisor and the Chief Psychiatrist for Liberia) and the Focal point for Mental Health in the Ministry of Health. An initial assessment of the current state of treatment for youth, found similar findings to Sierra Leone (see above). Before the arrival of a WHO psychiatrist, there was only one trained psychiatrist in the whole of Liberia. In September 2004, there was one facility in Liberia that was said to be caring for traumatised youth called the Holy Ghost

---

<sup>178</sup> Mental Health and Substance Abuse in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone, October 2002.

Mental Home. When visited by investigators, young patients were found with no clothes, little food and some were chained to a wall.<sup>179</sup>

Following a Sierra Leone model, a Community-Oriented Mental Health approach was used based on an initial analysis of the overall mental health situation. Interventions focus primarily on youth and are always undertaken in coordination with the larger community, involving traditional healers, religious and community leaders and others. They take into account the current poverty and dependence situation of the country and the necessity to run all interventions based on good clinical practice and at minimal cost. However, many youth may never recover from the traumas they have experienced as victims, witnesses and/or perpetrators. There are few resources for counselling; former soldiers receive only two days of counselling in transit camps. Support for community healing is also limited in many other ways.

## **B. International Financial Institutions**

### **The World Bank**

#### ***Background and mandate for engaging youth***

The World Bank states a commitment to improving the lives of children and youth by working “in an integrated way to meet the challenges of young people in developing countries. This means not only working in the area of health and education, but also in areas like agriculture, business development and the reform of the justice system to make sure that views of and challenges for young people are included when decisions are made.”<sup>180</sup>

Addressing youth at a World Bank youth conference, former president of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, stated that,

There are six billion people in the world today; 2.8 billion are under the age of 24, and 1.8 billion under the age of 14. You cannot ignore the fact that half the world is under 24; and that in the next 30 years, roughly 100 million people are born every year, so that in the next 25 or 30 years, we will have 2.5 billion more young people...It is essential that we utilise and work with and get the views of and partner with young people. It's not an option for us. Even if you were to reject us today, we have to keep trying because there's no alternative. It also is the most effective way that we can work, to work with young people, to understand young people, and to advance programmes and to design them with you.<sup>181</sup>

---

<sup>179</sup> UNDP consultant interview with Dr. Soeren Buus Jensen, MD, Ph.D. Senior Mental Health Advisor, WHO Mental Health Program, Monrovia, Liberia, February 2005.

<sup>180</sup> See: <http://youthink.worldbank.org/about/strategy>.

<sup>181</sup> Closing remarks by James Wolfensohn, President, World Bank to Youth, Development and Peace 2004 Conference, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, September 6, 2004.



### ***Ensuring youth integration and participation***

The World Bank has taken a number of steps to achieve integration of youth issues and youth engagement in all of its programmes as a priority. The Bank has supported a number of consultations with youth to develop a common youth agenda. The agenda guides the Bank on engaging youth in programme and policy. Key areas for action include education, healthy behaviours, unemployment, peacebuilding, youth participation in all aspects of development programming and participation in the elaboration of a child and youth strategy.<sup>182</sup> Some short-term programmes that the Bank supports uniquely serve youth, such as Youth to Youth Community (“Y2Y”), Nuevas Voces, Youth for Good Governance and Youthink! However, the Bank’s overall approach is to ensure that youth are integrated into all aspects of its work.

The Bank’s Children and Youth (C&Y) Unit and regional focal points play central roles in ensuring youth engagement in the Bank’s programming. The C&Y Unit is located within the Bank’s Human Development Division, where responsibility for implementing the children and youth strategy also lies. It tends to focus more on targeting youth directly than their broader social context, although concern is paid to their enabling environment. By contrast, the Bank’s Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit addresses youth more through a social development lens, where attention to youth is treated in part as a peace and security issue. According to Ian Bannon, of the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit,

...we face the daunting challenge of creating opportunities and a brighter future for these young people. If they do not have work or opportunities, then naturally they will become disillusioned and frustrated, nurturing a growing sense of exclusion. Their immediate instinct is not to resort to violence. But without hope they are easily influenced and manipulated. Excluded and disillusioned youths become the raw recruits of the next wars.<sup>183</sup>

The Bank supports youth participation across the interventions it supports in a variety of ways. As described above, it supported the creation of the Youth Employment Network (YEN) and a Youth Employment Summit aimed at influencing national and regional policies to better tackle the problem of youth unemployment.

### ***Youth and PRSPs***

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), designed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, was conceived as a new approach to the development of low-income countries focused on sustained economic growth and poverty eradication. PRSPs are an extremely important framework for development programming, as they form the basis for assistance provided by International Financial Institutions. The C&Y

---

<sup>182</sup> *World Bank Post-Paris Follow-up Actions Progress Report, Youth Development and Peace 2004 – Sarajevo*, Children and Youth, The World Bank, August 13, 2004.

<sup>183</sup> Bannon, Ian, “Development: The Neglected Road to Peace,” *The Transatlantic Quarterly*, Summer 2004, p. 8.

Unit and specific World Bank country offices work to ensure that the needs of young people are central to the PRSPs.

The Bank has introduced programmes encouraging youth to participate in the mid-term review process of the PRSPs through NGOs and special forums for youth in various countries. As reported by the UN Secretary-General in his *World Youth Report 2005*, “Seventeen of the 31 PRSPs completed between May 2002 and September 2003 give major attention to youth in their action plans. The focus in these plans is mostly on education and employment. Despite this positive trend, only six PRSPs have specifically identified youth as a group in poverty, and only 16 percent of PRSPs view young people as a focus for integrated interventions.”<sup>184</sup>

A content analysis of 31 PRSPs carried out by UN-Habitat and the YEN in Kenya shows that, while an increasing number of PRSPs in the last two years are taking into account specific needs of youth, these initiatives are often piecemeal, few state specific targets, budgets or benchmarks and, hence, limited in their scale and potential impact.<sup>185</sup> It should also be noted that PRSPs do not consistently address conflict and post-conflict environments specifically.

The way in which youth are incorporated in PRSP frameworks is illustrated by the boxed text below, adapted from the Cameroon PRSP document. More detail is needed on specific outcomes and the benchmarks for achieving them; these could serve as models for those developed by conflict-affected countries.

### **Youth in the Cameroon PRSP strategy**

360. Rapid urbanisation brings the major challenge of accommodating an increasingly young population. The Cameroonian population, like that of many other African countries, is relatively youthful, with an average age of 22 years; nearly 42 percent of Cameroonians are under 14 and more than two-thirds are under 30. As is the case everywhere, this population tends to concentrate in urban areas, resulting in increased pressure on social services, infrastructures, and labor markets. This is a situation that calls for heightened and sustained attention by all.

361. The Government of Cameroon is well aware of the extent of the problems and is in the process of drawing an integrated urban development policy. Its objectives are to (1) improve the living conditions of urban dwellers, a majority of whom live under precarious conditions; and (2) reinforce the economic role of towns by strengthening urban infrastructures (extension, rehabilitation, and maintenance). This will not only improve living conditions, but will also help to integrate youths, women and other groups into economic channels.

362. Although the strategy is still at a conceptual level, short-term actions are already underway to address the most pressing problems. They include:

- the rehabilitation of basic infrastructures (road maintenance and street lighting);
- low-cost housing;

<sup>184</sup> Report of the Secretary-General, *World Youth Report 2005*, A/60/61 – E/2005/7.

<sup>185</sup> UNDP consultant interview with UN-Habitat, Nairobi, Kenya, November 2004. See also: Draft paper - *Youth and the PRSP*, Youth Employment Network: Nairobi, September 2004.

- attending to the needs of street children and mentally deranged persons;
- sensitising prostitutes on the risks of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS;
- combating insecurity.

Source: Cameroon: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003, IMF Country Report No. 03/249, Chapter 3: Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy. Text slightly modified from the original.

### *The World Bank and youth in Sierra Leone*

Between 2001 and 2003, World Bank support for youth in Sierra Leone was almost entirely focused on the demobilisation and reintegration of young former soldiers.<sup>186</sup> From 2003 onwards, the Bank refocused its assistance on Sierra Leone's post-conflict recovery, including with a grant of US\$20 million to rehabilitate the primary education sector. The project involves "the provision of education and training opportunities for youth ages 14 to 20 that have been prevented from going to school when they were of an age to do so due to the war; about two-thirds of those in this age group find themselves in these circumstances."<sup>187</sup> This is a significant contribution to youth-focused education, lessons learned from which can support efforts in other areas.

The Bank is also adopting a development agenda, as is highlighted in the Sierra Leone PRSP to be presented at the Consultative Group meeting in May 2005. The Bank is working with the UN Country Team, Sierra Leone's MOYS and youth groups to organise consultations with youth around the country to ensure Sierra Leone's PRSP addresses their concerns. As stated by one World Bank official in West Africa, "Unless we figure out how to better work with them [unemployed youth] we risk throwing all our investment away."<sup>188</sup>

Since district elections were held in Sierra Leone in May 2004, the Bank has been working to support a process of decentralisation via a three-pronged strategy of small grants, technical capacity-building and the establishment of "development learning centres" throughout the country. Each of these approaches has involved a focus on youth, including youth employment initiatives, entrepreneurial training and the establishment of a micro-finance unit. When asked about the most important aspects of success in youth programming, a World Bank representative responded "It is imperative

<sup>186</sup> In 2001, the Interim-PRSP (I-PRSP) reflected the Government's priority to address the challenges of the transition from war to peace. The I-PRSP's objectives were to be implemented in two phases. In the transitional phase (2001-2002), emphasis was placed on: (a) restoring national security and good governance; (b) re-launching the economy; and (c) providing basic social services to the most vulnerable groups. The medium-term (2003-2004) would focus on good governance, revival of the economy and social sector development. See: *Republic of Sierra Leone IPRSP*, Republic of Sierra Leone, Freetown, Sierra Leone, June 2001. Although many of these activities directly address youth, there is limited mention of this demographic category as a specific beneficiary.

<sup>187</sup> UNDP consultant interview with James Sackey, World Bank Country Representative Sierra Leone, Freetown, Sierra Leone, February 2005.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

that youth, who have been marginalised until now, are able to truly take part in the decision-making process and their own development. The most successful youth programmes have incorporated youth participation at all levels—from planning to implementation and peer-review mechanisms. In the recovery stage this is difficult as it does not fit the criteria of quick impact. In the development stage, the youth themselves must be the main actors.”<sup>189</sup>

## C. Bilateral Donors

### USAID

#### *Background and mandate for engaging youth*

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is one of the largest bilateral donors in Africa with programming focusing on poverty reduction, democratic development and good governance, health, education, as well as the promotion of human rights and conflict prevention. Many of its programmes are cross-sectoral and involve many target groups as beneficiaries.

USAID’s programmes for youth in conflict-affected countries reflect the agency’s holistic approach. They emphasise social integration and meeting the needs of all youth in many aspects of their lives, particularly for conflict prevention. USAID’s *Youth and Conflict: A Toolkit for Prevention* states, “When young people are uprooted, jobless, intolerant, alienated and with few opportunities for positive engagement [in their respective societies], they represent a ready pool of recruits for groups seeking to mobilise violence.”<sup>190</sup>

The *Toolkit* defines youth as having reached the stage in life where they are physically capable of assuming adult roles but would generally not be expected to make decisions or provide support for others. The age range the agency uses in identifying youth is 15-24, although it acknowledges that this age range may vary for different societies. The *Toolkit* also identifies many of the reasons why youth engage in violence in developing societies. These include: economic incentives (economic gains for youth who participate in violence); limited opportunities for constructive social and political change; inadequate public services (i.e. education); unemployment; and the breakdown of traditional family and social networks (via urbanisation, forced migration and refugee crises). The framework underscores a need to understand and analyse the root causes of youth violence before attempting to propose solutions.

The development of the *Toolkit* shows a strong interest in youth on the part of USAID. However, it does not mandate action with youth. The *Toolkit* is not aimed at providing specific recommendations for USAID programmes (this would have to be done on a

---

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> CMM/USAID, *Youth in Conflict: A Toolkit for Intervention*, Conflict Mitigation and Management/United States Agency for International Development, 2004; <http://action.web.ca/home/cpcc/attach/Youth-and-Conflict-USAID.pdf>.

country-by-country basis)]. However, it does provide some suggestions for ways forward. Notably, it states that USAID programmes “...should consider a mix of job-training, job creation, political participation, sports and recreation, leadership and health training. In high-risk areas, conflict resolution, should be built into all these activities.”<sup>191</sup> It also states that the first strategic objective is “to reintegrate war-affected youth into society.”<sup>192</sup> This includes all youth, and does not differentiate between former combatants and other youth in the community. Little is said in detail about the diverse gender dynamics facing youth in and after armed conflict or how youth programmes should address them.

USAID support to youth and adolescents has primarily been executed through the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF).

### *Office of Transition Initiatives*

As reported in *Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone*, USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives conceived of and funded the **Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace (YRTEP) programme**, which was further developed and implemented by World Vision Sierra Leone, with Management Systems International. The programme targeted youth in order to reverse years of marginalisation and exploitation and to support young people’s empowerment. It was a two-year nationwide, non-formal education initiative for ex-combatant and non-combatant youth, aged 15 to 35, including resettled refugees and those displaced by the war. YRTEP focused simultaneously on reintegration of war-torn communities and remedial education for youth bypassed by schooling for nearly 10 years. Young people were trained in reintegration orientation and counselling, life skills training, vocational counselling, agricultural skills development, civic education and functional literacy. These young people then trained other youth in what they learned.

About 50,000 youth and former soldiers in over 2,000 sites participated in YRTEP. The programme also included a second track called Education for Nation-building, a nationwide non-formal education initiative for public and private sector leaders. The programme’s success in bringing together divided communities led to its extension and expansion to other areas. Youth involved in the programme reported that it developed real reconciliation and leadership skills but that more help was needed to put the skills to use for livelihood development. Responding to the criticism, OTI funded the **Skills Training and Employment Promotion (STEP) programme**, also implemented by World Vision Sierra Leone.<sup>193</sup> A two-year programme, STEP focused on further skills development, employment, cooperation, dialogue and psychosocial support for youth.

---

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Lowicki, Jane and Allison Anderson Pillsbury, *Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone*, WCRWC, 2002, p. 95. Although the programme focused on 15-35-year-olds, older people were also allowed to participate. See *Precious Resources* for information on dozens of other youth-focused initiatives in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

As a follow-up to YRTEP, USAID/OTI funded Christian Children's Fund to implement **Skills Training and Employment Generation (STEG)** programme, increasing the social reintegration of ex-combatants and other war-affected youth through community-based strategies of skills development, employment and psychosocial support. All activities are implemented in a way that is designed to stimulate cooperation between youth, ex-combatants and community members.<sup>194</sup>

**Don Bosco Rehabilitation and Skills Training Programme (DBRSTP)** was founded in 1991 through a joint initiative of UNICEF and the Salesians of Don Bosco. DBRSTP aims to reach disadvantaged youth in their late teens through 26 and provide them with rehabilitative skills training and counselling. USAID-OTI supported Don Bosco for over four years as part of its post-conflict reconstruction response in Liberia. USAID Liberia now supports both DBRSTP and Don Bosco Homes (DBH) with a focus on longer-term development.<sup>195</sup>

The DBRSTP offers skills training in carpentry, masonry, agriculture plumbing, auto mechanics, metal works and electricity. Currently working in four counties – Montserrado, Bong, Bassa and Bomi – the programme is reaching some 1,300 trainees. The Don Bosco association calls Liberia's youth a priority in need of marketable skills to make up for years of learning lost in the war and so they can contribute to rebuilding the country.<sup>196</sup> Since 1994, in collaboration with UNHCR, the DBRSTP has also provided skills training for Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia.

Disadvantaged children under the care of DBH include orphans, ex-combatants, street and unaccompanied children and children in trouble with the law. Night-shelters, transit homes, street contact, family tracing and reunification, medication, police-cell visitation, vocational education, legal-aid, recreation, counselling and many other services are provided for these children. Now working in five counties of Liberia DBH is currently reaching more than 980 beneficiaries nation-wide, including adolescents. DBH also runs three War-affected Youth Support (WAYS) projects for UNICEF in Kakati, Tappita and Zwedru. Also implemented in partnership with USAID, this project brought together child soldiers with other at-risk youth to develop positive life skills through HIV/AIDS prevention and peer education. Participants included child soldiers, teenage mothers and their children and youth in conflict with the law.

### ***Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF)***

DCOF was established in USAID in 1989 when Congress earmarked \$1 million to be used on behalf of orphans. By 2003, DCOF supported 28 programmes in 18 countries and addresses the needs of street children, children, and youth affected by armed

---

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96, 98.

<sup>195</sup> UNDP consultant interviews with Don Bosco, Monrovia, Liberia, February 2005. For information on Don Bosco programmes, see: [http://www.salesians.org.uk/html/empowering\\_liberia\\_s\\_youth.html](http://www.salesians.org.uk/html/empowering_liberia_s_youth.html).

<sup>196</sup> UNDP consultant interviews with Don Bosco, Monrovia, Liberia, February 2005.

conflict and children who are orphaned by disease, especially as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.<sup>197</sup>

The Fund recognises and tries to support the role of family and community as the first and best line of protection and care for orphans and other vulnerable children and wherever possible tries to engage adolescents and youth as “agents of change” and “role models” in working with younger children. The Fund supports activities that explicitly focus on children and youth and complements other USAID investments in health, child survival, HIV/AIDS control and prevention, education and civil society development. It primarily supports nongovernmental programmes with financial and technical assistance for direct interventions that can serve as models that can be brought to scale through expansion and, or replication. Government organisations, applied research, advocacy and legislative reform are also supported in conjunction with its NGO focus.

A major portion of the Fund’s resources have been devoted to children affected by armed conflict, including former child soldiers, in Angola, Liberia, northern Uganda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Attention has also been paid to the problems of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS in Malawi, Uganda and Zambia. Youth-specific support is included in a range of programmes such as HIV/AIDS prevention, reintegration of former soldiers, education and recovery from sexual violence. The Fund has supported innovative approaches to caring for and protecting street children in Brazil, the Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Peru, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Thailand and El Salvador. The Fund has also provided major support for the US Peace Corps’ “Youth in Development” program.<sup>198</sup> Programme reports include descriptions of approaches that are particularly effective with at-risk youth.

DCOF has taken holistic approaches to the reintegration of war-affected young people, where both particularly vulnerable young people, including former soldiers, and others are simultaneously supported. They also emphasise work to strengthen community support systems. The following are just some of DCOF’s reintegration support initiatives. DCOF supported the **Reintegration of War-affected Children Program in Sierra Leone**. The **International Rescue Committee** was funded approximately US\$1.59 million (2000-2003) to facilitate the reintegration of war-affected children and youth through Interim Care Centers, IDP centers and their communities in Bo District and the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone. DCOF also provided **UNICEF** with US\$1.5 million (1999-2001) to reunite and reintegrate unaccompanied children with their families and communities; develop long-term arrangements for unaccompanied children who could not be reunified with their families and communities; ensure that

---

<sup>197</sup> See: USAID, *2003 Displaced Children and Orphans Fund Portfolio Synopsis*, USAID, no date. USAID also administers the Leahy War Victims Fund (LWVF) and the Victims of Torture Fund (VTF), each of which impact the well-being of youth, among other war-affected populations. The LWVF supports the civilian victims of war and people living with disabilities. The VTF supports treatment and rehabilitation of individuals who suffer from the physical and psychological effects of torture.

<sup>198</sup> Elements reprinted from: Lowicki, Jane, *Untapped Potential, Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict, a review of programs and policies*, New York, USA, Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, January 2000, p. 68.

unaccompanied and other vulnerable children have access to basic education, primary health care and safe water; strengthen the capacity of a Child Protection Network (CPN); and produce a compendium of best practices on interim care, reunification and reintegration of war-affected children.<sup>199</sup> The CPN included 40 members, including UN bodies, national and international NGOs and government ministries.

Approximately US\$1.5 million more was provided to UNICEF to support the reintegration of child soldiers into society, including by IRC. Assessments show that painstaking work at the grassroots level permitted the successful reintegration of former child soldiers, addressing the fears and hatred of children who participated in the conflict felt by communities. Many girls and young women were found not to fare as well as they were by-passed by the formal DDR process and remained under the control of their rebel captors. DCOF support to UNICEF and IRC has helped to address their situation.<sup>200</sup>

In **Liberia**, beginning in 2004, DCOF supported programmes focused on vulnerable children in IDP camps in Montserrado County, considered to be the area in greatest need. These programmes improved child rights awareness, and involved the Ministry of Education in creating mechanisms and supportive school environments to protect those rights while creating opportunities for psychosocial and educational development in IDP camp settings. As IDPs return home, community-based structures will go with them, supporting children's rights. Support is shifting to Lofa county where nearly 200,000 refugees, IDPs and ex-combatants are expected to return. DCOF also supported IRC to reunify demobilised children in Lofa and Nimba Counties.

In **northern Uganda**, USAID supported a US\$10 million programme, Improved Foundation for the Reintegration of Targeted Areas of Northern Uganda (RENU), which included DCOF support for the reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for war-affected children and adolescents. Through **Red Barnet (Save the Children Denmark)**, DCOF committed US\$1.35 million beginning in 1999 to promote the reintegration of formerly abducted children into their families and communities in Gulu. Save the Children Denmark Uganda works with local partners to implement the project, including GUSCO, the Department of Youth and Children of the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development and the Gulu District Local Government. DCOF also provided US\$1.46 million to **AVSI** beginning in 1999 to work in Kitgum with **IRC** to improve the psychosocial well-being of formerly abducted children and adolescents, as well as that of the general population.<sup>201</sup>

---

<sup>199</sup> Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF), Project Fact Sheet: Sierra Leone, USAID, [www.usaid.gov/pop\\_health/dcofwvf/dc/sierradet.html](http://www.usaid.gov/pop_health/dcofwvf/dc/sierradet.html), as reported in *Precious Resources, Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone*, USA, WCRWC, 2002, p. 98.

<sup>200</sup> USAID, *Humanitarian Assistance, Sierra Leone*, USAID, updated May 5, 2005, [http://www.usaid.gov/ourwork/humanitarian\\_assistance/the\\_funds/dcof/sierraleone.html](http://www.usaid.gov/ourwork/humanitarian_assistance/the_funds/dcof/sierraleone.html).

<sup>201</sup> Uganda: FY 2001 Program Description and Activity Data, USAID, US Department of State, [www.usaid.gov/country/afr/ug/uganda.ads.html#ads](http://www.usaid.gov/country/afr/ug/uganda.ads.html#ads); and DCOF, *Honoring a Commitment to Vulnerable Children, 2001 Report*, DCOF, USAID, 2001, as reported in Lowicki, Jane and Allison Anderson Pillsbury, *Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents*, USA, WCRWC, 2001, p. 74.



### *Other programming examples*

Recognising that youth were being mobilised by politicians during the election campaign as thugs to engage in voter intimidation, the programme **Constructing Political Participation** was designed by USAID in partnership with Search for Common Ground (SFCG) to positively engage youth in electoral campaigning. Training was provided to youth groups on voter registration and election monitoring. The creation of a national youth network was also supported, involving peer-education for marginalised youth on voting and electoral procedures. Building on this project, USAID-Sierra Leone is planning to further support work with youth and the newly elected decentralised authorities.<sup>202</sup>

USAID is currently in the process of preparing the world's second largest (after Iraq) **police and military training** in Liberia, which will build upon work done by the United Nations Civilian Police.<sup>203</sup> Although it is not a youth programme per se, 75 percent of those who will be trained to be part of the new Liberian security forces are youth.<sup>204</sup> It will create jobs for these young people and opportunities to support the rule of law. The USAID security sector programme also emphasises the recruitment of young women. The inclusion of this group is seen as a means to promote Liberia's new phase in respecting human rights, especially the rights of young women to participate in society.<sup>205</sup>

## **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)**

### *Background and mandate for engaging youth*

GTZ is an international cooperation enterprise for sustainable development with worldwide operations organised as a private company owned by the German Federal Government. Since 1997, GTZ has implemented programmes on youth employment, young people's health, high-risk behaviour in youth, education and training, peace education for youth and crisis prevention training for young people. The agency believes that young people are the driving force of future development and thus offer tremendous potential for social innovation.<sup>206</sup>

---

<sup>202</sup> *Op cit.* CMM/USAID, p. 19.

<sup>203</sup> UNDP consultant interview with USAID Security Sector Reform Specialist USAID - Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia, February 2005.

<sup>204</sup> According to UNMIL CIVPOL, to date, 3,500 police officers have been trained by CIVPOL in close collaboration with USAID; UNDP consultant interview with UNMIL CIVPOL Training Officer, Monrovia, Liberia, February 2005.

<sup>205</sup> In light of the level of violence against young women during the war, the protection and the respect for human rights of young women are key themes of police training. Along with the Liberian police training, the UNMIL Gender Unit began to conduct training on gender issues for the Liberian Interim Police Force on February 20, 2004. See: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmil/pr41.pdf>.

<sup>206</sup> See: Schell-Faucon, *Developing Education and Youth-promotion Measures with a Focus on Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding*, GTZ, Eschborn, 2002; [www.gtz.de](http://www.gtz.de).

GTZ recognises that almost every aspect of development assistance and cooperation affects young people. GTZ programmes are guided by a belief that poverty, migration, civil wars, HIV/AIDS and the breakdown of family and social systems affect young people. As such, activities for youth are incorporated into programmes pertaining to trauma healing, health promotion, violence prevention, poverty alleviation, rural exodus and more. According to a GTZ–SL representative, “The aim of youth promotion in development cooperation is to improve on a sustainable basis the living conditions of young boys and girls in developing countries. Young people are encouraged to actively contribute to changing their situation and asserting their rights. Great emphasis is placed on developing young people’s potential for self-help, self-organisation - in short, participation and empowerment.”<sup>207</sup>

### *GTZ in Sierra Leone*

Since the official end of the DDR programme in 2004, GTZ has adopted an integrated and multi-sectoral strategy in relation to youth and their communities and is operating with less than two-thirds of resources available during the DDR phase. GTZ is still focusing primarily on young people and their integration into the labour market and/or back into their communities. Youth-focused programmes include skills training, capacity-building, income-generating activities, peace building and community empowerment:

- **Capacity-building** is directed at local self-help groups, farmers and community technicians, as well as Community Development Committees (CDCs) and local NGOs. GTZ interventions are all done in collaboration with local partners with the objective of handing them over to the implementing partner.
- **Skills training** aims to maximise absorption of trainees into the job market and participation in rehabilitation activities. Trainees are supported in setting up their own community-based micro-enterprises and income-generating ventures upon graduation.
- **Income-generating activities** encourage the establishment of small-scale enterprises to promote economic self-reliance. Self-help groups present their own requests to the project with a detailed business and maintenance plan before micro-projects are approved.
- **Community services and peace building** are backed by animation supervisors based in the communities. Self-help groups gradually take over responsibility for planning their own interventions in order to ensure the sustainability of activities after the end of the project.<sup>208</sup>

---

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, and UNDP consultant interviews with GTZ-SL, Sierra Leone, February 2005. During a brief visit by the UNDP consultant to GTZ training programmes in Waterloo, youth were actively involved in the design and implementation of skills programs and in negotiations on resource allocation and project management. This suggested that the GTZ youth policy was being translated into practice with regard to this particular project.

<sup>208</sup> UNDP consultant interview with GTZ – Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone, February 2005.

## D. International Non-Governmental Organisations

### CARE International

CARE International is an international, non-governmental relief and development organisation with programmes that focus on poverty reduction (economic development), HIV/AIDS, emergency relief and preparedness, health and education in developing countries. Over the last ten years, CARE has been working to integrate a rights-based and livelihoods approach for youth integration in all sectors of intervention.<sup>209</sup> These models provide the organising principle and integrating framework for CARE's programmes. They are designed to "articulate and address some of the grievances of rural people – especially rural youth – which have still not been addressed by international agencies."<sup>210</sup>

CARE has extensive programming to address youth and a long history of working in Sierra Leone (since 1961). CARE – Sierra Leone's (CARE-SL) work with youth is viewed as a model for developing and implementing youth programmes in other countries.<sup>211</sup> Since mid-2004, CARE-SL has transitioned to a post-conflict development mode with a focus on the consolidation of peace and the restoration of productive livelihoods. As the CARE-SL Country director explained, "Youth is a central theme in all of CARE's programmes, as we work to address the structural causes of marginalisation of young people." CARE's programming for youth is largely based on the results of an extensive action research programme, elaborated by Steve Archibald (CARE-UK) and Paul Richards (Wageningen University), based on a sustainable livelihoods and a rights-based approach.<sup>212</sup>

CARE-SL's **Enhancing Interaction and Interface Between Civil Society and the State (ENCISS)** programme works to identify and provide support to "genuinely representative civil society organisations (CSOs)." It builds partnerships between national, umbrella CSOs and local CSOs (and between state and civil society generally) and increases the capacity of civil society to contribute to Government of Sierra Leone efforts, including the PRSP, decentralisation and other programmes. ENCISS directly and indirectly targets youth through training, capacity-building, advocacy and micro-finance. The programme is implemented by a consortium of INGOs, including the American Refugee Committee (see below) and works in close consultation with the

---

<sup>209</sup> Key sectors include health, education, poverty reduction (e.g. livelihoods), HIV/AIDS and emergency relief and preparedness, including in any cross-sectoral combination. See: [www.careusa.org](http://www.careusa.org), 11-03-2005.

<sup>210</sup> UNDP consultant interview with Nick Webber, Country Director CARE SL, Freetown, Sierra Leone, February 2005.

<sup>211</sup> According to CARE SL's Country Director, CARE's commitment to youth is bolstered by an operating budget of over US\$41 million, a significant portion of which supports youth-focused programming.

<sup>212</sup> For more information, see: the RAWOO Study on Youth and Conflict. The authors are considered two of the foremost specialists on Sierra Leone, youth issues and livelihoods. See also: Richards, Paul, *Youth, Violence and Resources in Sierra Leone, Op cit.*

MOYS, providing the Ministry with technical and financial support to enable its participation and work with youth.

### **American Refugee Committee (ARC)**

ARC works for “the survival, health and well being of refugees, displaced people and those at risk; enabling them to rebuild productive lives.”<sup>213</sup> While there is little explicit mention of “youth” in the mandate or global project document of ARC, programming examples in Sierra Leone show that targeting youth is often a key objective. ARC works to involve youth in the planning and implementation of efforts, viewing this participatory approach as critical to the sustainability of programmes. Key programmes that target youth include health care, shelter repair, legal aid, trauma counseling, micro-credit, community development services and repatriation assistance.

The ARC microfinance programme, **Finance Salone**, delivers micro-credit services in Freetown and the districts of Kenema, Bo, Kailahun, Kambia and Port Loko. It is the largest micro-credit programme in the country. Youth 15 to 35 constitute almost the totality of participants in the micro-credit scheme. In 2005, the programme aims to disburse 18,941 loans totaling US\$2.5 million, with women comprising 77 percent of the participants.<sup>214</sup> ARC considers income-generating activities as a development goal, as well as a necessary component of conflict prevention.

The **Promoting Linkages for Livelihood Security and Economic Development (LINKS)** programme seeks “the sustainable reintegration of communities into dynamic local economies in Koinadugu, Kono and Kailahun Districts.” The programme is implemented by a consortium of CARE, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services and Talking Drum (Search for Common Ground), in collaboration with the MOYS. ARC provides grants, loans and technical support to low-income youth. Activities for 2005 include:

- Basic business management training for clients;
- Grants and loans for low-income youth;
- Loans for low-income entrepreneurs;
- Technical assistance for an agra-lending programme;
- Savings and literacy programmes; and
- Establishment of branches of Finance Salone in Kono and Kailahun.<sup>215</sup>

---

<sup>213</sup> UNDP consultant interview with Barbara Whitmore, ARC Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone, February 2005. See also: [www.arc.org](http://www.arc.org) for information on the Sierra Leone Project.

<sup>214</sup> *ARC 2005 Projects [Sierra Leone]*, ARC International, 2005.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

## Lessons to be learned

The huge problem of the ‘youth crisis’ has yet to be matched by a correspondingly huge response from the international community. In countries recently emerging from years of conflict, there is an extreme lack of resources and skills to address the distinct and diverse concerns of youth. Desk and field research combined have highlighted a number of key lessons for international actors attempting to engage with youth populations. These can be separated into (a) thematic lessons which clarify challenges specific to the intervention themes established in earlier reports (e.g., employment and livelihoods, education and DDR) and (b) programmatic/institutional lessons which highlight specific programmatic approaches and structural issues important to international agencies’ engagement with youth.

One strong motivation for working with youth concerns their role as violent actors. Youth well-being may serve as a marker for the potential outbreak of violence. The mass disenfranchisement of young people is a key stumbling block in the transition from war to peace in Sierra Leone and Liberia. As noted above, youth are key decision-makers, care-givers, heads of household, armed actors and more because of their age and social roles. However, their contributions and the risks they face are not reflected in the distribution of recognition or support for their access to education and employment or to political and other decision-making processes. Assistance has been provided to youth by international agencies, but the resources invested are only a small fraction of what is necessary to address the magnitude of the problem. A comprehensive framework for action with youth affected by armed conflict is needed, which must be adapted to the specific contexts.

Representatives from UN and international agencies in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal all argued for the importance of working to more effectively engage youth both as a vulnerable and resourceful community that is of key demographic and socio-political importance for peace and development. They all also cited the growing number of disenfranchised youth with little opportunities to earn their livelihoods, as a threat to stability in the entire sub-region. Youth unemployment was a common concern, as linked to education, health and DDR in post-conflict countries. However, it was viewed more as a security prerogative than as a development objective.

## Youth employment

At a recent youth conference in West Africa, the creation of jobs for young people was highlighted as the most important priority in the Mano River Union countries.<sup>216</sup> Employment is a form of conflict prevention that provides young people alternatives to illegal or violent livelihood. It is a cornerstone of reconstruction. However, few youth (in Sierra Leone and Liberia, are involved with the formal economic sector. Lack of training and education for young people is only part of the problem. Even with sufficient training programmes for a large portion of youth, the formal employment market in countries such as Sierra Leone could only a small percentage of these young

---

<sup>216</sup> MRU/ECOWAS conference on youth, Conakry, Guinea, January 2005.

people. At the same time, informal and semi-formal forms of economic activity that young people are involved in are not always recognised or supported as starting points for further economic development.

If youth employment is to be seriously addressed, training must be accompanied by entrepreneurial opportunities (notably micro-credit); governmental regulations and incentives favourable to the employment of young people; an increase in international investment; and an improved macroeconomic environment. More controversially, a change in immigration policy in northern countries might help by permitting more young people to temporarily immigrate to developed countries to exercise their skills.<sup>217</sup> Some of the key lessons to be learned regarding youth employment are:

- Small loans, start-up capital and tools often help youths start businesses. This needs to be accompanied by basic business skills, such as accounting, how to make a business plan and the value of saving and reinvesting their earnings.<sup>218</sup>
- Market surveys are needed to determine short- and long-term labour and skill needs for youth. When these are undertaken in participation with youth, more viable livelihood opportunities can be created.<sup>219</sup>
- Productive skills can make youth financially independent and/or enable them to contribute to the family income, both of which will facilitate their social acceptance.
- In rural economies, income generation for youth and programme sustainability can be facilitated by the production of agricultural tools by local blacksmiths because the tools can then be maintained and repaired locally.<sup>220</sup> Rather than distributing poorly made tools on a wide scale to young people who are re-settling, it would be more useful to rehabilitate local blacksmiths (providing them with an anvil, tools, bellows and a supply of scrap metal) on the promise that they take on a certain number of apprentices.
- Too often, adolescents are seen as helpless, vulnerable victims instead of “proactive survivors.” Needs assessments related to livelihoods planning should be situation-based, age-specific and participatory, and should investigate the resourcefulness of adolescents. They should account for and change or improve upon the coping

---

<sup>217</sup> This is not without controversy and caveats, particularly considering the phenomenon of “brain drain” in many developing countries. However, inability to migrate is considered to contribute to youth involvement in armed conflict when unemployment is high. See: Urdal. Some of the mechanisms that have been successfully used to encourage trained youth to return in countries in South-eastern Asia include mandatory civil service and home country investment requirement.

<sup>218</sup> For example, see the overview of American Refugee Committee Sierra Leone above.

<sup>219</sup> See bibliography for Lowicki, Jane, *Precious Resources* and *Youth Speak Out*, WCRWC, 2002 and 2004, respectively.

<sup>220</sup> UNDP consultant interview with FAO Country Director, Freetown, Sierra Leone, February 2005. According to the FAO Country Director, “In addition to ensuring sustainability, ex-combatants are performing well as apprentices to blacksmiths. The relatively small programme aimed at the production of farm tools and apprenticeships seems to have been more successful than many of the large scale DDR programmes.”

mechanisms they develop during emergencies, within a broad political, economic, social and military context.<sup>221</sup>

A final problem should be considered. In areas of conflict, there are few livelihood programmes (such as income-generation, vocational training and micro-credit), due in part to a tendency of donors to consider such activities as development programming or programming for longer-term displacement situations, as opposed to necessary programming in earlier stages of emergencies and post-emergencies. In addition, aid agencies are not necessarily required to provide such services, which are considered secondary priorities. The international community should recognise the building and protection of livelihood strategies for adolescents and adults in emergencies as a crucial component of a humanitarian response and should act to intervene earlier. An earlier response may help prevent adolescents' conscription into military forces, prostitution and exploitative labour practices.

## Education

Education is a means to prepare young people for entry into and participation within the workforce, as well as a vehicle to instill values of citizenship, responsibility, and cooperation. In rural areas in countries with recent conflict, teachers may have fled the country or have been killed, schools destroyed, and materials are scarce or entirely unavailable. Throughout the countries covered in the field research, the national curriculum was non-existent or so outdated that it amounted to the same thing. Even where there are no school fees, potential students miss out on educational possibilities since they lack transportation, clothes etc. Girls may not attend school because of cultural restrictions by the family or community. The following lessons to be learned can be highlighted:

- Skills training programmes have often been too short-term. Children and youth who opted to go back to school tended to stay in school, whereas those who received vocational training could not develop transferable skills within the limited programme period.<sup>222</sup>
- Adolescents affected by armed conflict often receive insufficient education services due in part to the prioritisation of primary school-aged children and funding for long-term development, with less attention being directed towards emergency settings. In Liberia, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education estimate that less than 30 percent of the population aged 15-24 is literate.
- Education services that are available to adolescents are not necessarily age-appropriate for their needs and may not take into account other responsibilities or interests adolescents may have, particularly the need to generate a livelihood. Programming for basic education of adolescents should involve flexible schedules,

---

<sup>221</sup> See: Lowicki, Jane, *Youth Speak Out: New Voices on the Protection and Participation of Young People Affected by Armed Conflict*, WCRWC, 2004.

<sup>222</sup> As one person interviewed commented, "Is it realistic to learn to become a carpenter in 6 months?" UNDP consultant interviews with SCF-UK, Freetown, Sierra Leone, February 2005.

participatory methods and curricula, which reflects their lives and interests and those of their communities.<sup>223</sup>

- Education programming for adolescents should be linked to programming in other sectors. The critical role of education in health promotion and preparation for livelihood needs to be taken into account. Educational programming for adolescents should be designed to enhance the effectiveness of all programming interventions on their behalf.<sup>224</sup>
- In general, curricula do not seem to be relevant to many young people in these countries. Specially comprised curricula, called ‘catch-up programmes’, have been developed for young people who missed several years of school because of a war.<sup>225</sup>

### **Reintegration of former soldiers and other youth**

In Liberia and Sierra Leone, the consolidation of peace will depend heavily on the ability to reintegrate young people (former soldiers and youth affected by fighting) into their communities. Important donor contributions have been allocated for short-term demobilisation and disarmament with varying levels of success. However, in both countries there is little long term programming which can truly tackle the complex problem of youth reintegration. Key lessons to be learned include:

- Programmes which only aimed at providing services (e.g. education, vocational training, livelihood assistance, etc) to former combatants caused division and resentment within communities between those who did fight (and thus receiving services) and those who did not. Civilians perceived former combatants as being the recipients of special treatment. Consequently, when former combatants received support to establish businesses within their communities, the communities did not engage in market interaction with them, causing their businesses to fail and thus creating incentives to return to combat.<sup>226</sup> A dual approach of benefits and

---

<sup>223</sup> It was found that many youths do not feel comfortable attending classes with younger children; school schedules did not accommodate their responsibilities for livelihood and family and costs were prohibitive. Educational activities that maintained flexible schedules and provided childcare increased accessibility to girls and adolescent heads of household. See: Lowicki, Jane, *Untapped Potential* and *Youth Speak Out*, WCRWC, 2000 and 2004, respectively.

<sup>224</sup> Youth have said education offers short- and long-term alternatives to soldiering and sexual exploitation, and can provide life-saving information, including reproductive health, gender based violence and HIV/AIDS prevention. In addition, well-trained peer educators, have been especially effective at reaching out-of-school youths with life-saving information. UNDP consultant interviews with youth group, Dakar, Senegal, and with UNICEF SL and Liberia, Freetown, Sierra Leone and Monrovia, Liberia, February 2005.

<sup>225</sup> To provide adolescents with alternatives to violence and a path to self-sufficiency, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) developed a “Youth Pack” program for 14- to 18-year-olds, who had little to no schooling. NRC cooperated with the Forum for African Women Educationalists, ActionAid and young people to adapt the Youth Pack program to the Sierra Leonean context. Youth Pack is one of the few adolescent- and youth-specific education in emergencies programs focused on accelerated learning that is being developed and tested. See also: Lowicki, Jane, *Youth Speak Out*, WCRWC, 2004.

<sup>226</sup> UNDP consultant interviews with Oxfam, GTZ and Don Bosco Homes, Liberia, February 2005.



sensitisation for the communities into which young ex-combatants are being reinserted, as well as for the ex-combatants themselves, helps to reduce tensions. Universality is also key – ex-combatants should not become a special entitlement group. Once their socio-economic situation is on a similar level to those who did not participate in fighting, even where this situation may be one of absolute poverty, they should no longer be individually targeted by international or national agencies.

- Follow-up activities may be necessary for long-term success. Even when training programmes were sufficient, youth were not able to find employment opportunities after finishing programmes. Upon completion of training, without entrepreneurial skills or investment capital, many young people turned to illicit activities, while former combatants continued to rely on commanders for economic support.
- In Liberia, insufficient community sensitisation as well as a lack of essential services undermined attempts to encourage communities to accept youths who wished to return to their home communities.<sup>227</sup> Consequently, a considerable number of youth have remained in the capital, while former soldiers have returned to their units, or found employment opportunities in neighbouring countries (eg. Cote d'Ivoire).

### **Flexible programming cycles**

Youth needs often fall between humanitarian and development aid. Adult literacy training can be necessary for security and livelihoods, but is not considered life-saving, and thus not humanitarian. Demobilisation and skills training can be considered as humanitarian-plus interventions to keep young people from taking up arms, but often these are far too short to offer real livelihoods skills.<sup>228</sup> This palliative response to reintegration is the main cause of frustration among former combatants. The resulting short-term peace may actually contribute to the likelihood of conflict in the future.

Engaging youth needs within difficult environments poses a serious challenge to the international community. Flexible programming is required to find a balance between development and humanitarian programming and to engage both state and non-state

---

<sup>227</sup> As one Liberian civil society leader said, “Even if the community was ready to accept these young people, what do they do back in the village? There might be a school, but if they are lucky enough to have the building, it is doubtful that the teachers are still there. And how will they earn their living? And where will they live? While the situation in the capital and many of these interim centres is sub-standard, it is paradise compared to what waits for them up-country.” When asked if it was possible to reintegrate these youth into their communities, he responded, “In the medium term, if we help to create minimum living standards, including schools, housing, and jobs then we can reintegrate many of these young people into their communities. But for the former militia members, those with blood on their hands, they may never be able to go back. And there are few international programmes that address their needs on a long-term basis. So, they will continue to fight, maybe not today, but tomorrow, maybe not here, but next door.” UNDP consultant interview, Monrovia, Liberia, February 2005.

<sup>228</sup> Humanitarian plus programmes can be defined as those that simultaneously work on humanitarian principles of saving lives, while also incorporating development frameworks such as longer programming cycles, and that in certain situations can contribute to conflict prevention. UNDP consultant interview with FAO Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone, February 2005.

actors. In these cases short-term humanitarian relief should be harmonised with longer-term development approaches.

### **Participation of youth at all stages of the project**

Emerging best practice by the World Bank, USAID and other actors indicates that participation of youth in project development and implementation is one of the most important means to ensure sustainability. It is crucial to identify and involve young people throughout the stages of programming – from inception to evaluation. Programmes must fully account for young people and respond to their locally defined roles and responsibilities. The participation of youth should go beyond consultation to a role of true leadership to ensure that programmes have their intended effect and are sustainable.<sup>229</sup> At the same time, parents, teachers and community leaders should be involved in projects to ensure sustainability.

Unfortunately, while donors and international aid agencies have recognised the need to ensure more participation by youth to ensure sustainability of projects, the gap between policy and practice can be quite large. Particularly in conflict-affected countries, levels of youth participation are insufficient to achieve long-lasting and sustainable impact.

### **Conclusions**

It is important to adopt multi-sectoral approaches, which support links between programmes directly targeting youth and those for which youth are indirect beneficiaries. An inherent part of this is ensuring a safe and supportive environment. Many of the vulnerabilities faced by young people, including economic and sexual exploitation and health risks can begin to be alleviated if a secure and enabling environment is achieved. The pressures on youth and especially young girls should not be underestimated.

---

<sup>229</sup> See: Lowicki, Jane, “Beyond Consultation: in support of more meaningful adolescent participation,” *Forced Migration Review*, October 2002.

## Bibliography

- Abrahamsen, R., *Disciplining Democracy – Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa*, Zed Books Ltd., London, New York, 2000.
- Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action – A Handbook for Practitioners*, ALNAP, London UK, 2003.
- Afshar, H. and Eade, D. (ed.), *Development, Women, and War – Feminist Perspectives, A development in Practice Reader*, Oxfam GB, Oxford, 2004.
- Assefa, H. and Wachira, G. (ed.), *Peacemaking and Democratisation in Africa – Theoretical Perspectives and Church Initiatives*, East African Educational Publishers Ltd, Nairobi, 2003.
- Assensoh, A. B. and Alex-Assensoh, Y., M., *Africa Military History and Politics – Coups and Ideological Incursions, 1900 – Present*, Palgrave, New York, 2001.
- Chua, A., *World on Fire: How Exporting Free-market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*, Arrow Books, London, 2004.
- Douma, P. S., *The Origins of Contemporary Conflict – A comparison of Violence in Three World Regions, Study 18*, Clingendael Institute, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael Conflict Research unit, The Hague, 2003.
- Francis, David J., 'Tortuous Path to Peace: The Lomé Accord and Postwar Peace building in Sierra Leone', in *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 2000, pp. 357-353
- Gender and Development, Humanitarian Work, An Oxfam Journal*, Vol. 9., No. 3., Oxfam GB, November
- Graduate Institute of International Studies (Geneva), *Small Arms Survey 2004 – rights at risk*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004.
- Harris, P., and Reilly, B. (ed.), *Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict: Options Negotiators*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Stockholm, Sweden, 2003.
- Hirsch, John L., 'War in Sierra Leone', in *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 3, Autumn 2001, pp. 145-162
- Holden, S., *AIDS on the Agenda – Adapting Development and Humanitarian Programs to Meet the Challenge of HIV/AIDS*, ActionAid, Oxfam GB, and Save the Children UK, London UK, 2003
- Kingma, Kees, 'The Role of Demobilisation in the Peace and Development Process in Sub-Saharan Africa: Conditions for success', in *African Security Review*, Vol. 5, No. 6 (1996) available at <http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/ASR/5No6/Kingma.html>
- Kingma, Kees (ed.), *Demobilization in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Development and Security Impacts* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000)
- Lord, David, 'The struggle for power and peace in Sierra Leone' Accord available at <http://www.c-r.org/accord/>
- Verthey, Beth, *Child Soldiers: Preventing, Demobilizing and Reintegrating*, (Washington D.C.: World Bank, African Region Working Paper Series, No. 23, 2001) available at <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/wps/wp23.pdf>
- Vlassenroot, K. and Raeymaekers, T., *Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern DR Congo*, Academia Press Scientific publishers, Gent, 2004.
- Weisner, T., Bradley, C., and Kilbride, P. L.(ed.), *African Families and the Crisis of Social Change*, Bergin and Garvey, Westport, CT, 1997.

## *Other Resources*

- Akina Mama wa Afrika, African Women's Leadership Institute, Project Proposal to UNDP Regional Gender Programme Manager, No date
- Bethke, Lynne, Global Survey on Education in Emergencies, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, USA, February 2004.
- Bonn International Center for Conversion, The Demobilization and Reintegration of Women Combatants, Wives of Male Soldiers and War Widows available at [http://www.bicc.de/demobil/demobilisation\\_draft.htm](http://www.bicc.de/demobil/demobilisation_draft.htm)
- Bruchhaus, Eva-Maria, When the Wars are Over...Reintegration and Rehabilitation as Part of Sustainable Development, D+C Development and Cooperation, no. 6, Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung, available at <http://www.dse.de/zeitschr/de699-4.htm>
- Chalabesa, Chansa-Barbara, GSL Presentation (Global Student Leadership Program) – My Experience, Regional Gender Program Stakeholders Workshop, Johannesburg, South Africa, 15-17 February 2004
- Colletta, Nat J. et al, Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition, World Bank Discussion Paper No. 331 (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1996)
- Conciliation Resources, Gender and Conflict in Sierra Leone, available at [http://www.c-r.org/pubs/occ\\_papers/briefing5.shtml](http://www.c-r.org/pubs/occ_papers/briefing5.shtml)
- Conciliation Resources, Rural Women and Girls in the War in Sierra Leone, available at <http://www.c-r.org/pubs>
- Global Student Leadership Program 2003, GSLNET
- Global Witness, The Usual Suspects, March 2003. Available at <http://www.globalwitness.org/reports/show.php/en.00026.html>
- GTZ document: [http://www.gtz.de/youth/downloads/material\\_akzente\\_0104\\_eng.pdf](http://www.gtz.de/youth/downloads/material_akzente_0104_eng.pdf)
- GTZ project overview, Children and youth, <http://www.gtz.de/uthyo>
- GTZ, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Ex-combatants in Post-War and Transition Countries available at [http://www.bicc.de/demobil/gtz\\_studien/demobilisation.pdf](http://www.bicc.de/demobil/gtz_studien/demobilisation.pdf)
- GTZ, Kinder- und Jugendförderung in der EZ, <http://www.gtz.de/youth/deutsch/publikationen.html>
- Heninger, Lori, Learning in a War Zone: Education in Northern Uganda, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, USA, February 2005.
- International Crisis Group, Cote d'Ivoire: No Peace in Sight, July 2004, available at <http://www.icg.org/home/index.cfm?id=2858&l=1>
- International Crisis Group, Guinea: Uncertainties at the End of an Era, December 2003, available at <http://www.icg.org/home/index.cfm?id=2430&l=1>
- International Crisis Group, Rebuilding Liberia: Prospects and Perils, January 2004, available at <http://www.icg.org/home/index.cfm?id=2496&l=1>
- IRIN, LIBERIA: A shattered nation on a long road to recovery, 17 August, 2004, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=42707&SelectRegion=West Africa&SelectCountry=LIBERIA%20id=r-9>
- Lowicki, Jane and Allison Anderson Pillsbury, Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents in Northern Uganda, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2001, <http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/ug.pdf>
- Lowicki, Jane, Fending for Themselves: Afghan Refugee Children and Adolescents Working in Urban Pakistan, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children Mission to Pakistan, January 2002, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2002.

- Lowicki, Jane, Making the Choice for a Better Life: Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Kosovo's Youth, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2001, [http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/you\\_adol.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/you_adol.pdf).
- Lowicki, Jane and Allison Anderson Pillsbury, Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2002, <http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/sl/index.html>.
- Lowicki, Jane, Untapped Potential: Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2000, <http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/adol2.pdf>
- Lowicki, Jane, Youth Speak Out: New Voices on the Protection and Participation of Young People Affected by Armed Conflict, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004, [http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/cap\\_ysofinal\\_rev.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/cap_ysofinal_rev.pdf).
- Mukangara, C., Global Student Leadership, Speech delivered at Regional Gender Program Stakeholders Workshop, Johannesburg, South Africa, 15-17 February 2004
- Page, K., UNICEF Regional Communication Officer, Western & Central Africa Region, Leadership for Human Security: Confidence Building & Conflict Management Project, Dakar, 23 April 2003
- Schell-Facon, S., Developing Education and Youth-Promotion Measures with Focus on Crisis Prevention and Peace-Building, A GTZ study, Division 43: Health, Education, Nutrition, Emergency Aid, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Eschborn 2002
- Smyth, M., [draft] The militarization of youth in violently divided societies: Some observations on Northern Ireland, South Africa and the Middle East, U.S. Institute of Peace, April 24, 2003
- Sommers, M., "Power and the Powerless." *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action* 2(4): 11-12, 1998, <http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/0/e0fc13e604164824c12565a3003915cd?OpenDocument>
- Sommers, M., "Peace Education and Refugee Youth." In *Learning for a Future: Refugee Education in Developing Countries*, Jeff Crisp, Christopher Talbot, and Daiana B. Cipollone, eds. Geneva: UNHCR, 2001, <http://www.unhcr.ch/pubs/epau/learningfuture/learningtoc.htm> [Chapter 4]
- Sommers, M., "Young, Male and Pentecostal: Urban Refugees in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 14(4): 347-370, 2001, [http://www3.oup.co.uk/refuge/hdb/Volume\\_14/Issue\\_04/140347.sgm.abs.html](http://www3.oup.co.uk/refuge/hdb/Volume_14/Issue_04/140347.sgm.abs.html) [for article abstract]
- Sommers, M., "On the Margins, in the Mainstream: Urban Refugees in Africa." In *Humanitarian Action: Social Science Connections*, Stephen Lubkemann, Larry Minear, and Thomas G. Weiss, eds., Occasional Paper #37. Providence, RI: Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, 2000, <http://hwproject.tufts.edu/publications/abstracts/op37.html> [Chapter 3]
- Sommers, M., "Youth, War, and Urban Africa: Challenges, Misunderstandings, and Opportunities." In *Youth in Developing World Cities*, Diana Varat et al., eds. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003, <http://wwics.si.edu/topics/pubs/ACF1AEF.pdf>
- Sommers, M., *A Charade of Concern: The Abandonment of Colombia's Forcibly Displaced*, (with Holly Myers). New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1999, <http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/> [under "Americas"]

- Sommers, M., *A Child's Nightmare: Burundian Children at Risk*. New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1998, <http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/> [under "Africa"]
- Sommers, M., *Children, Education and War: Reaching EFA Objectives in Countries Affected by Conflict*. Washington, DC: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit Working Paper No. 1, World Bank, 2002, <http://www.ineesite.org/core/default.asp> [under "Core Reference Materials on Education in Emergencies"]
- Sommers, M., *Co-ordinating Education During Emergencies and Reconstruction: Challenges and Responsibilities*. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, 2004. <http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/publications/recent/emerg.htm>
- Sommers, M., *Crossing Lines: "Magnets" and Mobility among Southern Sudanese*. Washington, DC: Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity and Creative Associates International, 2002, <http://www.ineesite.org/core/default.asp> [under "Evaluations and Case Studies"]
- Sommers, M., *Emergency Education for Children*. Cambridge: Mellon-MIT Program on NGOs & Forced Migration, MIT 1999, [http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/migration/pubs/mellon/1\\_children.html](http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/migration/pubs/mellon/1_children.html)
- Sommers, M., *Final Evaluation of the Office of Transition Initiatives' Program in Sierra Leone* (with Art Hansen, Julie Nenon, and Joy Wolf). Marc Sommers and Cynthia Prather, eds. Washington, DC: Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity, Creative Associates International, 2002, [http://www.beps.net/crisis\\_situations/crisis\\_sierra.htm](http://www.beps.net/crisis_situations/crisis_sierra.htm) [under "Resources"]
- Sommers, M., *NATO and Humanitarian Action in the Kosovo Crisis* (with Larry Minear and Ted Van Baarda). Providence: Humanitarianism and War Project, Brown University, Occasional Paper #36, 2000, <http://hwproject.tufts.edu/publications/abstracts/op36.html>
- Sommers, M., *Parallel Worlds: Rebuilding the Education System in Kosovo: A Case Study* (with Peter Buckland). Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, and Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2004 <http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/publications/recent/emerg.htm>
- Sommers, M., *The Children's War: Towards Peace in Sierra Leone*. New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1997 <http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/> [under "Africa"]
- Sommers, M., *The Dynamics of Coordination*, Providence: Humanitarianism and War Project, Watson Institute, Brown University, Occasional Paper #40, 2000, <http://hwproject.tufts.edu/publications/abstracts/op40.html>
- Sommers, M., *The Education Imperative: Supporting Education in Emergencies*. Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, and New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2003 <http://www.aed.org/ToolsandPublications/upload/EducationImperative.pdf>
- Sommers, M., *The Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace (YRTEP) Program: Summary of Findings*. (Edited with Cynthia Prather). Washington, DC: Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity, Creative Associates International, 2002, [http://www.beps.net/crisis\\_situations/crisis\\_sierra.htm](http://www.beps.net/crisis_situations/crisis_sierra.htm) [under "Resources"]
- Sommers, M., *War, Urbanization, and Africa's Youth at Risk: Understanding and Addressing Future Challenges*. Washington, DC: Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity and Creative Associates International, 2003 <http://www.beps.net/publications/BEPS-UrbanizationWarYouthatRisk-.pdf>

- Sommers, M., Youth: Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies: A Field Guide. Washington, DC: Children in Crisis Unit, Save the Children, 2002, <http://www.ineesite.org/core/default.asp> [under “Field Guides for Practitioners”]
- UNDP – Africa Bureau (RBA), Congressional Staff Briefing, Mission Report, 15 August 2003
- UNDP News, Young Women Changing the Way the world Works, UNDP News, Oct. 1, 2003
- UNHCR and Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children under the auspices of the Inter-agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations, Work with Young Refugees to Ensure Their Reproductive Health and Well-being: It’s Their Right and Our Duty, A Field Resource for Programming With and For Refugee Adolescents and Youth, 2002.
- UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO), A Sub-Regional Project Proposal on Conflict Management and Peace Building, Dakar, Senegal, April 2004
- UNICEF, Adolescent Programming in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations - Case Studies, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2003
- Urdal, H., The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950-2000, World Bank, Social Development Papers, Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction, Paper No. 14, July 2004
- Wald, M. and Martinez, T., Connected by 25: Improving the Life Chances of the Country’s Most Vulnerable 14-24 Year Olds, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Working Paper, Stanford University, November 2003
- Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children A Resource List for Adolescent Programming in Conflict Settings, Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, New York.
- World Bank Sierra Leone Recovery and Reintegration Project, Project Information Document, 1999-2003, [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1997/09/05/000009265\\_3971229183445/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1997/09/05/000009265_3971229183445/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf)
- World Bank, Sierra Leone: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) (Washington D.C.: World Bank Findings, Africa Region, No. 17, October 2002) available at <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/findings/infobeng/infob81.pdf>
- Youth, Development & Peace, From Paris to Sarajevo - One Year Review, Progress Report, the World Bank, 2004

## Internet Resources on youth

- Youth Employment <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/targets/youth/>
- UNAIDS HIV/AIDS <http://www.unaids.org/youngpeople/index.html>
- UNDCP Substance Abuse <http://www.undcp.org/youthnet/>
- UNESCO Education, Youth Development <http://www.unesco.org/youth/>
- UNFPA Sexual and Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS <http://www.unfpa.org/adolescents/index.htm>
- UNICEF Health, Education [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)
- UNIFEM Gender, Empowerment of Girls and Women <http://www.unifem.org/>
- UN Youth Unit UN Focal Point on Youth [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/)
- World Health Organization (WHO) <http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/>
- Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Youth Development, Employment

## Conclusions and recommendations on the way forward

---

*What does civil society mean if the majority of its members feel that they don't belong to it?*<sup>230</sup>

This strategic review set out to better understand the relationship between youth and violent conflict and to array the types of programmes and approaches to the problem by UNDP, UN partners and others. In so doing, it went far beyond this objective to explore the definition of youth, the precarious situation of youth, the development crisis that is weakening the societies in which they live, and how these factors are intersecting with violent conflict. In each chapter, whether it examined international agendas and policy frameworks, the research literature or activities by UNDP and other partners, there was a recognition among international actors and experts that youth pose an enormous challenge in developing societies. This challenge and responses to it can influence whether societies fracture, maintain the status quo or emerge from this crisis of development.

UNDP and other actors in the UN system, along with donors and NGOs, have been trying to address some of the challenges of the situation of youth. Activities have ranged from traditional and special education measures, volunteering, and peace training to youth employment schemes and reintegration of ex-combatants. For the most part, these efforts have been few, small-scale, time-limited, and under-resourced. It is clear that there is scope for doing much more. However, the magnitude of the problem itself makes it difficult to arrive at a clear idea on what to do and indeed how to frame the problem.

The absence of a working framework for youth and violent conflict reflects not only a lack of consensus on how to understand the problem, but also flaws in the understanding of youth, violent conflict and their intersections. The assumptions that are found in existing policy frameworks, activities and programmes are often simplistic and deterministic (particularly the idea that conflict is driven by a small number of factors such as youth unemployment and a demographic “youth bulge”.) The dynamics that generate violent conflict are more complex and less automatic.

This chapter pulls together the main findings of the research presented in the preceding chapters. After discussing initial conclusions and their implications for policies and programmes, it proposes some ideas for creating a new framework to address the challenges posed by youth and violent conflict and then offers specific recommendations for moving the agenda forward, for programming and specifically for UNDP.

---

<sup>230</sup> Marc Sommers, *Urbanization, War and Africa's Youth at Risk: Towards Understanding and Addressing Future Challenges*, USAID, 2003, p12.



## Initial conclusions: implications and best practices for policies and programmes

### *Characterising youth*

Both policy and the programming it informs often treat youth as a homogenous category or generic label that isolates this particular age group from the rest of society. Approaches based on conceptions of youth as a self-defining, cohesive group are informed by a stereotyped vision and therefore are bound to lead to flawed responses. Age-based definitions are a prerequisite but must be flexible enough to accommodate country contexts, and be complemented by an understanding of youth as a transition from childhood to adulthood.

Stereotypes also need to be broken with regard to gender issues and how to deal with them. For example, responding to the needs of girls and young women is not merely a question of “involving girls more” in the implementation stage. Similarly, responses aimed at boys must not see them primarily as potential perpetrators of violence. It is therefore crucial that a gender-sensitive approach be adopted when planning, implementing and evaluating policies and programs.

In particular, it is crucial not to treat youth as merely a security issue, particularly because the majority of youth do not get drawn into violence. National and international agencies dealing with youth should recognise that youth violence (and the participation of youth in violent conflict as a specific manifestation of it) is a complicated phenomenon, which should be addressed at multiple levels of society (individual, households, communities).<sup>231</sup> Working with youth is necessary not only because they can resort to violence if ignored, but because allowing young people to channel their vitality in positive directions *can lead to outcomes that are beneficial to the whole of society*.

Youth strategies and programmes should take into consideration the inherent complexity of the notion of youth as a social and functional construct. Youth is a complex reality – not a generic label. Programmes to ameliorate the circumstances of youth require more precise identifications of the target group they are trying to help.

### *Defining the problem to be addressed*

There is a tension found in policies, strategies and programmes between blaming something inherent in “youth” as the source of their own problems and focusing on the surrounding environment that conditions how youth behave. As youth crisis can be understood, to a significant degree, as a crisis of the transition of youth to adulthood, responses that target “youth” as a category can in fact contribute to the problem, rather than to its solution.

---

<sup>231</sup> See conclusions by Benvenuti 2003, p. 36. “Without these structural interventions, the problem of youth violence may possibly be contained, but it is unlikely to be eradicated”.

The causes of youth crisis are largely exogenous to youth – it has much to do with the shrinking of economic, social and political prospects that youth are confronted with. Young people in most developing countries have few education and employment opportunities, and thus decreasing opportunities for establishing themselves as adults in an increasingly competitive world. Excluded from decision-making, they may see the mainstream political channels as irrelevant. Their responses can be violent (e.g., terrorism, gangs, criminality, random violence, etc) or non-violent (urbanisation, migration, and religious participation). All are responses to a lack of status, and courses of action adopted to renegotiate the youth passage to adulthood. The problem, therefore, is to increase both the concrete opportunities available to young people and their sense of inclusion in society.

Responses therefore need to take a comprehensive approach that deals with economic, social and political challenges, rather than working from the assumption that young people are inherently a problem and directing their activities to a target group identified as youth.

### *Where are the girls?*

In analytical and policy frameworks, programmes and activities, girls and young women are mentioned and then they disappear from the picture. On the ground, “youth programmes tend to attract far more adolescent boys and young men than adolescent girls and young women.”<sup>232</sup> This tendency to overlook girls and young women emerges primarily because the relationship between girls and violent conflict is not well understood.

As a result, youth strategies and programmes tend to adopt a gender-biased approach that focuses only on male youth as actual and potential generators of violence, and female youth as actual and potential victims. Instead, they should be aware of the fact that the priorities of males and females are different, and that boys are likely to be much more visible and vocal, that their roles in society and their own expectations are different.

National and international actors should better understand how the concept of youth is linked to gender, and translate such enhanced understanding into action to better respond to the needs of girls and young women. It is not merely a question of “involving girls more” in the implementation stage. It means understanding where the differences are and addressing them in a flexible manner. A gender sensitive approach should be adopted when planning, designing, implementing and evaluating strategies and programmes.

### *The challenge of meaningful participation*

While young people constitute a majority of the population in some countries, their majority status is not reflected in the distribution of recognition, access to

---

<sup>232</sup> Marc Sommers, Youth Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies A Field Guide, Save the Children, 2001, p.16.

education/employment, or their economic/political position in relation to other groups in society. For example, although youth constitute a majority of voting-age citizens in Africa, very few elected officials are under 30. For the most part, youth wings of political parties used merely as tools to amass political power. Moreover, cultural norms that value the leadership of elders in the community and in politics, particularly in Africa, create a generational conflict between a majority youth and older generations. The mass disenfranchisement of youth constitutes one of the key stumbling blocks in the development process, transition from war to peace and the prevention of violent conflict. Youth have neither been recognised as legitimate agents of changes, nor have they been empowered or capacitated to fulfil this responsibility.

Whilst donors and international aid agencies have recognised the need for greater participation of youth in projects, from inception to evaluation, the gap between intention and practice can be quite large. Many adolescents are forced prematurely into adult roles and responsibility through war, social upheaval and increasingly with the HIV/AIDS crisis. In this context, “participatory methodologies involving young people without their having a significant level of control over inputs and outcomes are absurd and belittling.”<sup>233</sup> “While participatory processes can empower young people, they can also further manipulate them, depending on the level to which adolescents are consulted and able to make choices – full participation goes beyond consultation to opportunities for leadership.”<sup>234</sup> For maximum effectiveness, youth participation should go beyond consultation to real, meaningful involvement where youth are viewed not only as beneficiaries or targets of assistance but as decision-makers. At the same time, parents, teachers and community leaders should be involved in projects to ensure sustainability.

In trying to increase youth participation, UN organisations appear to have placed too much emphasis on youth organisations, youth NGOs and leaders. Though an attractive option in terms of accessibility, in practice there are several problems with this. First, it does little or nothing for the vast majority of youth. Many youth movements appear to simply entrench elites, or are dominated by the most articulate and socially engaged young people. In contrast, more marginalised groups are excluded and ignores the fact that *all* young people need the chance to learn organisational skills if they are to take on significant roles in building their communities. Second, youth movements may replicate the orientation of established organisations, which focus on providing services to disadvantaged young people rather than empowering those groups and helping them define and voice their own priorities and concerns. Third, the large number of round tables, forums, global and regional workshops as mechanisms for increasing participation to “bring youth together” appear to have had little effect either in terms of outcomes (beyond declarations) or in the broader goal of facilitating real participation of youth in the affairs that most concern them.

However, while more meaningful participation of youth is necessary, it is also insufficient to produce a noticeable improvement in the lives of youth without greater investment in development based on the principles outlined above and below.

---

<sup>233</sup> Jane Lowicki, “Beyond consultation: in support of more meaningful adolescent participation.” *Forced Migration Review* 15, pp 33-35.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35.

### *Challenges to developing programming*

One significant obstacle to designing and implementing relevant programmes for youth in conflict situations is the perception that the adolescent males and young men involved are personally threatening to those seeking to help them. This perception underlies programming which treats this group as essentially a security threat to be disarmed, distracted, kept occupied or otherwise neutralised – not as full human beings with potential to be realised and capacity to contribute to society. As a result, “the most important youth to include in programmes, finally, are likely the hardest to reach,” including young women who are bound to domestic spaces.<sup>235</sup>

Comprehensive programming, based on a more complete view of youth’s potential, can be both costly and lengthy. This is a serious issue given the short-term nature of crisis funding, and the limited funding available. Such funding for youth as is available often needs to be divided between both children and young adults, each of which may require very different programming approaches. Programming for young adults may be harder to “sell” than for children, particularly if it is seen as supporting people who should be supporting themselves.

Undertaking a reliable assessment of the youth situation in a given time or place throws up its own methodological difficulties, which may be exacerbated by the mobility of youth (relative to other age groups), cultural attitudes which prevent them from speaking frankly or which make them defer to their elders, and gender-based restrictions on communicating with young women. If the programming approach is one based on involving youth partners, there may be problems in identifying individuals who can speak for their peers and who are acceptable to them.

In some post-conflict situations, however, youth needs fall into the gap between humanitarian and development assistance. While literacy training can be important for employment and thus security, it is not life-saving and therefore not classified as humanitarian; in contrast, skills training projects within demobilisation programs are considered to be humanitarian but they are not sustained long enough to have any real benefit. This gap is compounded by funding shortfalls in post-conflict situations, with fewer resources available once the humanitarian crisis is considered to be over. The international community should recognise the building and protection of livelihood strategies for adolescents and adults in emergencies as a crucial component of a humanitarian response and should act to intervene earlier. An earlier response may help prevent adolescents’ conscription into military forces, prostitution and exploitative labour practices.

### *Youth unemployment*

Representatives from UN and international agencies in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal all stated the danger of the growing number of disenfranchised youth, with little opportunities to earn their livelihoods, as a threat to stability in the entire sub-region.

---

<sup>235</sup> Marc Sommers, *Urbanization, War, and Africa’s Youth at Risk*, p. 15.

Youth unemployment (in itself linked to education, health and DDR in post-conflict countries) is largely seen as a security issue, rather than a development objective.

Training of various kinds appears to be the most common approach to employment-related youth programming. However, despite the reported numbers of trained youth it is difficult to measure the impact of this training. Skills training programmes have often been too short-term. While young people who opted to go back to school tended to stay in school, those who received vocational training were frequently unable to develop transferable skills within the limited programme period.

In addition, much of this training is aimed at moving youth into the formal economy or providing them with the skills to do so. This misses an important obstacle, however: few youth are actually involved with the formal economic sector, and lack of training and education for young people is only part of the problem. Even with sufficient training programmes for a large portion of youth, the employment market in countries such as Sierra Leone could only absorb another 5% of these young people in addition to the 10% currently in formal employment.

International actors should refocus their efforts on the demand side in the economy's capacity to create jobs and less on the supply side relating to youth and their skills as labour in the workforce.

### *Reintegrating ex-combatants*

The reintegration of ex-combatants is a key priority in consolidating peace. While there are a number of serious obstacles to successful reintegration programming, an important lesson learned is that the focus has to be wider than just the ex-combatants themselves. For example, programmes providing services to former combatants only can cause resentment within communities between those who fought (and thus receive services) and those who did not, even when both are in a similar state of need. This means programming should take into account both the young ex-combatants and the wider communities. Beyond the question of services provided, it has been learned that community sensitisation and consultation prior to reintegration is key if communities are to accept youths who wish to return to their homes.

Most demobilisation and reintegration programmes tend to almost exclusively focus on young boys and men, neglecting young girls who may have been combatants, slaves or camp followers. The special needs of young women, particularly those with children fathered by combatants and therefore frequently rejected by their communities, requires concerted attention and funding.

### *The challenge of education*

Education is a priority for young people, both to prepare them for participation within the workforce, and to instil values of citizenship, responsibility, and cooperation. In various surveys, research and consultations, youth from all backgrounds had one thing in common, the desire for education. However, many young people involved in or affected by violent conflict are receiving insufficient education services. This is due in part to the higher prioritisation of education for primary school-aged children, but also

because education funding is conceived as a tool for long-term development, with less attention being directed towards emergency settings.

In addition, even in places with low levels of youth literacy, education services too often do not take into account other responsibilities young people may have, such as making a living or helping out at home. Programming for basic education of youth should involve flexible schedules, participatory methods and curricula reflecting their life situations and interests and those of their communities. Where necessary, specially adapted curricula (such as “catch-up programmes”) may be needed for young people who missed several years of school because of violent conflict.

## Towards a framework for youth, violent conflict and development

There are many ways in which international actors can do harm through their responses to the challenge of improving the situation of youth to prevent violent conflict or its reoccurrence, in fact reinforcing the youth crisis rather than addressing it. The lessons learned described above all suggest some useful guidelines for agencies and institutions grappling with the issues of youth, conflict and development. These guidelines suggest an outline for a new framework of action for international actors that can inform the development of policies, programmes and activities.

Above all, a more constructive framework for youth and violent conflict should stress the importance of doing no harm. This requires an accurate definition and characterisation of youth and their relationship to violent conflict. This will ensure that policies and programmes are more responsive to the precise problems they seek to address and that they avoid further aggravating the situation, particularly by generating false expectations that the situation of youth is going to be vastly improved. In place of ad hoc and small level interventions with grand ambitions, a framework that is holistic and crosscutting reflects the importance of taking into account the necessity of working at multiple levels of society (individual, households, communities) as well as linking programmes directly targeting youth and those for which youth are indirect beneficiaries.

It also requires a shift in thinking from *consulting* with youth, to putting youth, in all their manifestations, *at the centre of the process* for developing policy and programmes. The youth leadership forums and summits that have emerged in various parts of the world were mostly consultative exercises: youth were free to say what they wanted and the power structures were free to ignore what they said. It is essential that mechanisms be created that make youth participation part of decision-making structures on an ongoing, sustainable basis. Both decision-makers and programming specialists must learn see their role as working *with* youth to design programmes, not designing programmes *for* them.

Furthermore, a new framework must place more emphasis on the social and economic realities creating the many problems facing youth rather than assuming youth are the problem. The widely accepted emphasis on training is important, as is employment generation through the public or private sector, and developing entrepreneurship among young people who are outside school or the formal economy. However, the youth employment challenge is larger than just creating jobs; it concerns the basic and

challenging problem of how to establish functioning economies in countries struggling to create jobs at all, to promote growth and to generate government revenue. If youth employment is to be seriously addressed, training must be accompanied by governmental regulations and incentives favourable to the employment of young people, an increase in international investment, and an improved macroeconomic environment.

Finally, a new framework must take into account the necessity for programme design and implementation to be context-specific. While programmes can always benefit from the lessons learned in other parts of the world, there are no approaches or methodologies that are universally applicable to the challenges facing youth. The critical measure of success for any youth programme is how the programme addresses the specific reality of youth within country. In the preparatory stages, needs assessments should be carried out that are situation-based, age-specific and participatory, and should investigate the resourcefulness of young people. They should account for, and change or improve upon, the coping mechanisms young people develop during emergencies and in the periods following conflict. Energy spent towards developing a global youth agenda or global youth policy might be better directed towards local activities and results.

A better-informed focus on youth and its relationship to violent conflict provides a different way of thinking about development. It reminds us that the transition from childhood, through the experience of adolescence to becoming an adult, is critical for the family, community and political structures that underpin society. This does not mean “doing development by focusing on youth;” it means re-conceptualising development and societal transformation through the processes whereby children become youth, youth attain adulthood and adulthood is fully realised. Developing a framework for youth and violent conflict is useful for conflict prevention, but its significance is greater in its potential contribution to processes for building a durable peace and for development itself.

The magnitude of the problem demands real investment in youth and their societies. The immensity of the problem of the ‘youth crisis’ has yet to be matched by a correspondingly large response from the international community. In the end, the best framework or agenda will be irrelevant unless it is reinforced by serious funding and by organisational commitment to address the issue of youth and violent conflict.

## Recommendations on the way forward

### *Agenda-setting*

1. Leading UN agencies, such as UNDP and UNICEF, the World Bank, donors and NGOs should institute a consultative process to figure out how the international community can help governments and populations respond to the challenge of youth and violent conflict
2. The 10 year review of the World Programme of Action on Youth in 2005 coinciding with the GA discussion of the MDGs provides a timely opportunity for the youth

agenda to draw more attention to the intersections between youth and violent conflict, based on a better understanding of violent conflict

3. The conflict prevention agenda should adopt a more sophisticated understanding of youth, both as a factor in violent conflict and as agents of peaceful change in societies. If governments and societies bear the primary responsibility for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, where youth and young people are prevalent they should have an important role in these efforts.

### *Programming*

The following recommendations suggest a best practices approach to any type of programming, whether specifically targeting youth or integrating a youth dimension into traditional programming.

1. Adopt a working definition of youth that accounts for their diversity and does not treat them as one homogenous group. Programmes and activities need to specify who they mean by youth and which youth they are trying to reach.
2. Understand that youth is a fluid category marking the transition from childhood to adulthood, where identities multiply and shift, and contradictions are intrinsic to the process. Programmes need to be context-specific but continually evaluated to ensure they remain pertinent to the evolving needs of youth, the challenges they face and the mechanisms they adopt to cope with their environment.
3. Place youth at the centre of the process rather than as a target group to be consulted, from the assessment of the problem, through programme design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. Youth participation needs to move beyond rhetoric to practice, and beyond the focus on youth activists and youth organisations, to involving the most marginalised youth.
4. Ensure programmes do not unintentionally reflect a fear of youth, particularly by ensuring that programmes and participatory processes reach out to the most problematic youth and not just the most articulate and engaged youth leaders who make easy interlocutors for international actors.
5. Do not treat youth as the problem or solution. Targeting programmes to youth does not mean identifying them as something unique or separate from their societies. Societies and communities need to be mobilised, not just one particular age group. Therefore holistic and crosscutting approaches offer the most useful framework.
6. Ensure that girls and young women do not “disappear” by recognising that youth includes young men and young women, boys and girls. In some contexts, girls and young women may be harder to reach but this obstacle should not be an excuse for overlooking them. The crisis of society concerns young women as much as young men, with gender-specific consequences for society. A gender-sensitive approach involves more than just inviting more girls to participate, it requires a better understanding of the intersections of girls and violent conflict.
7. Ensure programmes and activities are conflict-sensitive and do not contribute to the conditions and motivations that encourage youth to engage in violence and to



withdraw from society. Anything that increases or aggravates feelings of distrust, resentment, loss of status and so forth are likely to affect youth more than other age groups. International actors must consider the perceptions of their efforts by youth in addition to the intended outcomes and impacts.

8. Work within national strategies and policies on youth, or provide support for the development of national strategies and policies where none exist, particularly in ensuring that national policies reflect best practice and avoid the problems enumerated throughout this review.
9. Above all, ensure a “do no harm” approach that does not create false expectations among youth with promises of projects and funding that will suddenly and visibly improve their lives. The challenge is immense; success will be limited and partial. Programming to improve the situation of youth will not be easy and there are many opportunities for failure. Adopting a realistic and modest approach more accurately reflects the situation that exists whereas ambitious wish lists of activities that are unlikely to materialise suggest naivety and are misleading to youth.
10. The issue of youth and violent conflict is not the purview of any single agency or organisation, not only because the problem cuts across mandates and across peace, security and development agendas, but also because the magnitude of the problem requires the contributions of all actors. Ameliorating and improving the situation of youth requires the mobilisation of societies, governments and the international community. Collaboration amongst international agencies is a prerequisite.

## ***UNDP***

Unlike other specialised agencies in the UN system like UNICEF or UNHCR, UNDP’s mandate is the development of under-developed societies in its broadest sense ranging from poverty eradication to good governance. Its work does not focus on one issue area or one target group. However, across the globe, populations in developing societies are becoming younger and youth are becoming important factors in these societies. Therefore, UNDP needs to reorient its approach, not by creating youth focal points or mainstreaming youth into its different practice areas but by re-conceptualising development in terms of new realities found in developing societies themselves.

In addition to following the recommendations above, UNDP should give consideration to the specific recommendations below pertaining to its unique role and capacities:

1. UNDP needs to recognise the changing dynamics in developing societies and ensure that its current work reflects these changes by giving priority to youth as an important factor in development.
2. UNDP should use its close relationship with governments to assist national stakeholders develop and implement national youth strategies and policies through an interactive process involving youth.
3. UNDP, in partnership with others, could play an advocacy role within the UN system to draw attention to the situation of youth as a factor in development, peace and security.

## **Annex 1: Other UNDP youth-related projects**

---

### **Albania: Support to Security Sector Reform (SSSR)**

**Objective:** To increase awareness of dangers related to small arms and light weapons (SALW), and other human security issues amongst schoolchildren in Albania.

**Target beneficiaries:** Children aged 6-18.

**Duration:** 4 months in 2002

**Brief Description:** Many of the dangers that children face in Albania are connected to the prevalence of small arms and light weapons. Although weapons collection activities have been largely successful and basic mechanisms for eventual national control are now in place, it is estimated that 200,000 SALW are still in the hands of the civilian population. These weapons can turn simple arguments into deadly conflicts; facilitate criminal activities; or be misfired and kill their handlers. Oftentimes, children are the unfortunate victims of SALW misuse. Security challenges that are tied to the proliferation of SALW in Albania are human trafficking, prostitution, drugs and blood feuds. Compounding the problem is the role of the Albanian police.

In 2002, UNDP launched the Small Arms and Light Weapons Control (SALWC) project to undertake SALW collection and control activities in Albania. The SSSR program was created not only to address the tools of violence, but also to *develop the components of civil society necessary for sustainable security*. To address these twin issues, the SSSR program was divided into two components: Community Safety and Security and Police Transparency and Accountability. The SSSR program has so far implemented Awareness Education in 21 schools in 5 regions, and between April and July 2004 had reached 18,000 students. By bringing police and other experts into schools to discuss pressing security issues, the SSSR program aimed to make Albania a safer place for children. Additional outcomes were an improvement in the image of the police, and the development of sustainable relationships between important institutions of civil society

### **Serbia and Montenegro: Rapid Employment Programme in South Serbia**

**Objective:** Creation of immediate job opportunities for unemployed people, especially younger people through infrastructure rehabilitation works and other activities related to the public benefit, contributing to the peace and stabilisation process and to the recovery of the local economy.

**Target Beneficiaries:** 6,000 workers to be employed on short-term, high impact sub-projects

**Duration:** 12 months (2001)

**Total Budget:** 4,000,000 Euros

The project is designed to contribute to the efforts of national authorities towards ethnic reconciliation and social and economic stabilisation in South Serbia. REP is an employment creation/income generation program, targeting mainly unskilled labour in the rural areas and vulnerable groups of inhabitants from the urban areas. The immediate objectives of the project were:

- 1) To identify small infrastructure works such as road repair and water beds cleaning, houses and public building repairs as well as water supply and electric lines repairs, in parallel with reforestation initiatives and environmental cleaning to be carried out with the direct and active participation of villagers and municipalities.
- 2) To locally recruit a significant number of unemployed people. Due to the diverse ethnic balance in each one of the four municipalities, the recruitment process will be closely monitored by the REP programme in order to ensure that vulnerable groups, ethnic minorities and young people will be the principal beneficiaries.
- 3) To enhance the organisational capacities of villagers and improve communications and relations between villagers and in the municipality, through a common engagement in the infrastructure improvement works and through networking channels created by the REP between the communities and the municipal representatives.
- 4) To improve skills, highlighting women's participation and decision-making, for workers and local and municipal representatives.

### **South East Europe: Regional Integration through Volunteers Exchanges for Reunion of South East Europe (RIVER SEE)**

**Objective:** Setting up Volunteer Exchange scheme through strengthening of the volunteer management/organisational capacities of the civil society/volunteer involving organisations in the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro)

**Target beneficiaries:** Volunteer youth of 18 years and above

**Duration:** 2 years (beginning 2004)

**Budget:** 1,043,995 USD

**Description:** The RIVER SEE programme set up a Volunteer Exchange scheme for the Balkan Region to develop the capacity of the Civil Society/Voluntary Involving Organizations (CSO/VIOs), community groups and individuals to be proactively involved in civil initiatives that reinforce development efforts and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) while contributing to a process of regional confidence-building and reconciliation. Specifically, volunteer exchanges will contribute to develop the organisational and coordination capacity of Civil Society/Volunteer-Involving Organisations to network cross-culturally and across borders with other grass-root organisations, communities and individuals, and to build substantial volunteer capacity, partnerships and skills through outreach and training while improving their capacity to target specific issues related to local development and governance processes.

The Volunteer Exchange scheme will be set up by UNV/UNDP, operating in close partnership with EU/EVS, VSO, OneWorld and SEEYN, building the capacity of Implementing Partner Organisations (IPOs) to identify, mobilise, manage and retain large volunteer workforce and resources. Management training, tools and skills will be developed in areas ranging from selection, to pre and post departure orientation of volunteers, programme monitoring, evaluation and analysis. The programme will also raise the profile and visibility of the IPOs and it is envisaged that at the end of the program cycle, they will be fully recognised for their efficiency and contributions to civil society development through mobilisation and skilful management of volunteers. The programme's best practices will be collected in a publication to inform interested parties locally and internationally, and to further promote volunteerism.

Regional co-operation, enhanced by the RIVER SEE programme developed in a participatory manner with all parties, can help accelerate democratic and economic development and facilitate reconciliation efforts and a willingness to put past wrongs behind while developing “habits of co-operation in the Balkans”.

## **Latvia: Co-ordinated Support to Young People’s Health and Development in Latvia**

**Objective:** The project aims to develop unified training programmes on peer education with nationwide and regional involvement of NGOs as well as government institutions. The project will promote the integration of life-skills education into school curricula with emphasis on HIV prevention and reproductive health issues. The project also expands the audiences for peer education training on reproductive health issues and HIV/AIDS to vulnerable young people in out-of-school settings. The ultimate project objective is to limit the spread of HIV in people under the age of 25 in Latvia.

**Target beneficiaries:** Schoolchildren. Ages 6-18.

**Duration:** 2 years (beginning 2001)

**Budget:** USD 426 340

**Description:** Over the past few years, many international and local organisations in Latvia have undertaken activities in peer education. However, the various initiatives lack a unified approach or understanding on peer education issues. Several youth health centres opened in Latvia in 1990s, but due to the lack of state funding, most of them have closed or are not focusing on health care delivery to young people. The statistics on youth health show that young people in Latvia have alarming rates of HIV and other STDs, face problems related to drug abuse and increasing rates of suicide. The project activities are directly linked to the National Strategy to Limit the Spread of HIV/AIDS in Latvia from 1999 till 2003 and to the National Public Health Strategy until 2010.

The project will equip young people with the necessary tools to protect themselves from HIV infection and to address their health concerns. The project has five sub-goals:

- 1) Improve the knowledge of young people on sexual and reproductive health issues, including HIV/AIDS, through the provision of peer education to young people. This includes the development of informative and training materials on peer education; increasing capacity of NGOs working with youth in Latvia (training in peer education) and assisting them in implementing peer education projects locally.
- 2) Strengthen the work of NGOs working with especially vulnerable young people through specially designed and adjusted peer education programmes on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health. This includes collaboration among four NGO’s, development of pilot training materials, and implementation of peer education training projects.
- 3) Strengthening youth-friendly approaches to health services delivery and linking these services to NGOs working on youth health and development: This component includes developing a Youth Friendly Health Services Delivery training material package for professionals and information material for policy makers, young people and the general public. Training courses for health care providers will be conducted in several regions.
- 4) Integrate a life-skills education approach on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS into school curricula: This component includes development of a life-skills education training package on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health for schoolteachers.

5) Develop a regional network for youth health and development in the Baltic States: The leading implementing agencies will receive training and information so they can serve as regional resource centres.

Additional Information Resources [www.aidsnet.lv](http://www.aidsnet.lv), Young People in Changing Societies

## **Russia: HIV/AIDS prevention and care program of the Russian Orthodox Church**

**Objective:** To decrease the HIV/AIDS incidence in the Russian Federation and mitigate the impact of the epidemic on those infected and affected.

**Target beneficiaries:** School children 6 –18 years old.

**Duration:** 2 years (beginning 2003)

**Description:** To support the Church, whose mission is to promote social responsibility and spiritual growth of an individual, to develop a national programme on the prevention of HIV/AIDS. With appropriate information available and with the support of the Church people can change their behaviour and as a result decrease the risk of the HIV infection and spread of the virus. The project works with

- Children, teenagers and youth as the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS social group;
- HIV-infected people and their relatives and friends;
- Public education workers, teachers of higher education institutions, specialists working with youth, including educators and psychologists as those who can promote the dissemination of objective information on the problem and thus help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- Clergy and theological students as those who can help change people's attitude to the problem both on church-wide and parish levels and in society as a whole and influence the public opinion;
- Members of parish communities as part of society participating in the formation of public opinion;
- Drug-dependants as a risk group.

**The expected outputs of the project consist of prevention**, support of HIV+ affected and increased public awareness of HIV related problematic and counteract stigmatisation and discrimination of PLWHA.

## **Bosnia And Herzegovina UNV/UNDP Integrated Youth Programme (IYP)**

**Objective:** To promote, support, and complement efforts towards the empowerment of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in such way to contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A major overall objective of the integrated Youth Program is to assist the development of a national Youth Policy in BiH and the associated institutional arrangements.

**Target beneficiaries:** young people

**Duration:** 1999 – present

IYP involves four major components:

1. Institutional Building at Municipal and State level
2. Confidence and Capacity Building for young individuals and youth organisations
3. Local Economic Development and promotion of Youth Entrepreneurship
4. Youth Volunteer Centre establishment.

The programme started in the late nineties focusing on community level reconciliation. A major objective of the integrated Youth Programme is to assist the development of a national Youth Policy in BiH and the associated institutional arrangements. To this end, the programme took the bold step of establishing thematic working groups involving Youth Branches of ALL political parties in BiH and youth civil society organisations focusing on specific youth issues and able to provide specific recommendations.. In 2002 a second phase added the policy and institutional components while retaining a grassroots component.

Building up on its extensive experience in working with youth leaders on different capacity building and advocacy issue, is currently in the process of spearheading a new initiative: the **Model of Council of Ministers**, consisting of a range of capacity building and empowerment activities, aimed at young people coming from political parties and youth NGOs and having the objectives to:

- Enhance the sense of ownership among youth toward political decisions of the CoM
- Incorporate youth views in CoM decisions
- Build capacities of young people to actively participate in the decision-making processes in BiH

The aim is to foster increased and direct cooperation and dialogue between the youth branches of all the political parties in an operational manner thus strengthening reconciliation amongst the younger generations while encouraging more active interest in the political system.

## **Bulgaria: Improved Juvenile Justice**

**Objectives:** The project's main objective is to facilitate improvement of the now effective juvenile justice

**Target beneficiaries:** young offenders

**Duration:** October 2002 to March 2004

**Budget:** US \$96 417

**Description:** The project provides support to the launching of an improved juvenile justice model through establishing pilot youth probation centres in two Bulgarian municipalities: Blagoevgrad and Burgas. The project is working towards an improved interaction between judicial and extra judicial juvenile justice systems; ensuring greater effectiveness of community measures and punishment; child protection and guaranteeing the child's best interest. Youth probation centres will help achieve these objectives through: the implementation of concrete probation measures and programs, facilitating coordination between bodies charged with juvenile justice, and helping improve methodologies to work with juvenile delinquents.

The project's expected results and benefits included:

- Introduction of probation as alternative to imprisonment in juvenile justice;
- Popularisation of international standards and probation models in juvenile justice among professionals in the field and the public;

- Popularisation of the humanitarian approach of working with juvenile delinquents and the community based on penal and/or reformatory measures;
- Two municipalities with operational youth probation centres at the time when the new *Probation Act* is passed and takes effect.

## **Africa: African Women's Leadership Institute**

**Objective:** The project aims to develop, strengthen and promote the leadership potential of young African women; provide leadership training for young African women who are in leadership positions in women's NGOs, mixed NGOs, government institutions or corporate bodies; and to respond to the leadership needs of African women – individuals and their organisations

**Target beneficiaries:** young African women

**Duration:** 2004/2005 and 2005/2006

**Budget:** 591,800 USD

**Description:** Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA) – the implementing partner of the project, established the African Women's Leadership Institute in 1996, which serves as a network for strengthening young African women activists, and holds an annual leadership-training institute. The institute provides training for African women aged 25-40 in critical thinking on gender issues, organisational and resource development and strategic planning. The goal is to encourage and train significant numbers of young women for leadership positions that will ultimately promote a progressive African women's development agenda. AmwA has trained more than a thousand women since 1997 through four regional institutes; four sub regional institutes and twelve national leadership workshops. AMwA's leadership programmes have been widely acclaimed as a sound investment in the future of Africa's leadership.

The initiative originated from the requests of AMwA's partners in various parts of Africa, and was highlighted during the 4<sup>th</sup> United Nations World conference on Women, which took place in Beijing in 1995. AMwA aims to provide solidarity, support, and awareness and to build links with African women active in the areas of their own development. African women's organisations need avenues to place their own issues on the development agenda and to strengthen links with women's groups in Africa and in the North.

## **Zambia: Adaptation of Songhai Model at Kasama Youth Centre**

**Objective:** The main purpose of the project was to impart skills to unemployed youths for barefoot research and simple means of exploring ways of utilising the biodiversity and mineral resources by converting them into economically viable products for the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction. In adopting the Songhai Model, the project also captured the results/experiences of the Regional Project- ZERI and the University of Zambia, Mineral Resource Unit project on application of partially acidulated phosphate rock as a fertiliser, supported by United Nations University, as a way of obtaining best results for optimising the utilisation of Zambia's biological and other natural resources with minimal wastage.

**Target beneficiaries:** unemployed youth

**Duration:** April 2001 to December 2003

**Description:** Zambia has a very high proportion of young people, currently estimated at 68% (0-24 years). This population imbalance poses a number of challenges and difficulties for the country in so far as the youth (15 – 25 years) are concerned. These include limited training facilities, unemployment, vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and lack of empowerment and self-confidence.

In addressing the youth challenges the Government of the Republic of Zambia requested UNDP in 1999 through the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development (MSYCD) to assist their efforts to empower youth. From April 2001 to December 2003, UNDP supported a pilot project – Adaptation of Songhai Model at Kasama Youth Training to establish a youth training centre for agro-processing and other local-resources based socio-economic activities in Kasama, based on the model of the Songhai Centre in Porto Novo, Benin.

The Songhai Centre model is based on the zero emission concepts, which is also being promoted by the regional project on Sustainable Development from Africa's Biodiversity through the Zero Emission Research Initiative (ZERI). Zero emission is built on the premise that a lot of resources that are currently regarded as having no economic value; being a waste to be thrown away; or as being a nuisance such as the water hyacinth (Kafue weed) could be utilised to produce energy, fertilizer, stock-feed or used as substrate for growing mushrooms.

The project was to be implemented in phases. The first phase focused on the establishment of the centre, development of the appropriate curriculum and testing its suitability, while the second phase focuses on the enhancement of entrepreneur skills and supporting graduates to establish their own businesses. UNHCR has now associated with the Centre and are sending the refugees to train on regular basis. The centre has hosted various community training workshops on HIV/AIDS, gender and organic farming. Most graduates are self-employed and their enterprises are fairly successful.

An evaluation of the project indicated that the model is successful and need to up scaled so that it could further contribute to youth empower and poverty reduction.

## **Mozambique: Support To The National Integrated Programme For Social Action Employment And Youth**

**Objective:** The project aims to increase the social and economic assets of people living in absolute poverty, particularly for women heads of households, youth and people with disabilities, in order to empower them to actively participate in the struggle against poverty. The immediate objective is to increase and improve the capacity of the communities to access resources – training and capital – for the development of their full productive potential thus improving their livelihoods.

**Target beneficiaries:** youth as part of poverty stricken communities

**Duration:** 4 years (2002-2006)

**Budget:** \$2,180,000

**Description:** The project supports the strengthening of the government's capacity to coordinate the planning, formulation, budgeting and implementation of programs outlined in the PARPA, to ensure a direct impact on local communities particularly the most vulnerable groups, and the development of feedback mechanisms, to improve pro-poor policy making. The project's initial phase from 1999 to 2001 was dedicated to piloting approaches to community based poverty reduction initiatives.



The project employs a twofold strategic approach: (i) creation of an enabling environment for pro-poor rural development and (ii) support to the organisation, capacity building and empowerment of the poor themselves to address poverty with the resources at their grasp. Activities include the development of capacity within the government at central and principally local level, to plan and implement poverty reduction initiatives; social mobilisation at the grassroots level and facilitation of formation of community associations and; provision of seed capital, technical assistance and training for the initiation of income generation activities.

## **Lesotho: Establishment of National Youth Corps**

**Project beneficiaries:** The project targeted unemployed school leavers to promote an environmentally aware and sensitive youth. The project activities directly benefited farmers with protected and rehabilitated lands, city dwellers with a cleaner environment as well as road users and indirectly the government, NGOs, village councils and the private sector.

**Description:** A key aspect of the project was to assist the government to set up a mechanism for employing young people to work in projects and activities that address environmental concerns and promote environmental awareness and at the same time contribute significantly to youth employment and self-employment.

The project addresses two specific problem areas which are priority concerns for the government: (a) creation of employment opportunities for young people and continued income generation after project completion (b) rehabilitation of degraded land, maintenance of reclaimed areas and general protection of the environment. Poverty in Lesotho is closely related with environmental degradation especially in rural areas.

School leavers have a hard time finding work because of their inexperience and lack of skills. Youth unemployment in Lesotho is much higher than the national figure and a concerted programme of action involving governmental and non-governmental organisations and the private sector was elaborated to create employment opportunities and promote sustainable income generating activities for young people.

Activities were demand driven and the identification and implementation of project activities was done in cooperation with NGOs, local organisations, governmental agencies and private sector

**Intended outputs:** The establishment of a National Youth Corps for 1500-3000 youth with the following end results:

- Sustainable productivity restored to previously degraded areas
- Environmental awareness both amongst policy makers and local people
- Several income generating environmental activities
- A programme of environmental education and public awareness promoted and established through the ministries, NGOs and the private sector
- Network of NEYC activities established throughout the country supported by the publication of a newsletter
- Youth on the job training for natural resource management

## **Kenya: Linking Vocational Training to Industry to Enhance Youth Employment Project**

**Duration:** 2004 to 2008

**Target beneficiaries:** youth

**Description:** A precursor to the current project, the Youth Linkage programme (1999 to 2003), aimed to link technical training to industry needs, with the Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) as the implementing agency. FKE sensitised its members to accept students from selected national polytechnics and universities for field attachments and placements, and allow their tutors to work closely with the firms to help bridge the gap between training and prevailing industrial requirements. This led to the placement of over 3000 students in industry and at the end of five years over 60% were eventually absorbed in those industries as employees.<sup>236</sup>

Current efforts linking training with employment are being carried out through the Linking Vocational Training to Industry to Enhance Youth Employment Project. Due to the economic slowdown in Kenya in the last decade, the majority of jobs for youth and women are being created in the informal sector. This project therefore aims to strengthen the linkages between the formal and informal sector to unlock the potential of the informal sector for generating youth employment. To achieve this, the project aims to bridge the skill gap between the informal and formal sectors, enhance job placements, develop and implement sub-contracting instruments and arrangements between the formal and informal sectors.

## **Papua New Guinea: Bougainville Rehabilitation and Reconstruction and Development**

**Objective:** To improve the ability of government staff and community organisations to initiate, design, implement and sustain development.

**Budget:** 2,349,663 USD

**Duration:** 4 years (from 1998)

**Description:** The project provides for (a) the restoration of basic conditions in Bougainville for sustainable human development; and (b) the re-vitalisation of an economy and infrastructure severely damaged by conflict. The intention is to support the reconciliation and peace process in Bougainville through rehabilitation, reconstruction and development activities that reduce poverty in all groups, restore basic conditions for economic growth, promote stability, and create an enabling framework for sustainable human development.

The project sought to facilitate the return of normal social and economic life on Bougainville through the integrated rehabilitation of youths (ex-combatants). The provision of material and technical support to assist displaced populations to resettle in their original villages; strengthening the capacity of women to participate in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Bougainville and the restoration of smallholder agriculture in the target areas, including the rehabilitation of cocoa cultivation were also among other objectives of the project.

Since its inception in 1998 the project has played a key role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Bougainville, including making the following contributions:

1. 17,000 out of a targeted 24,000 households returned to cocoa production

---

<sup>236</sup> Brief prepared Fortunatus Okwiri, UNDP Kenya

2. Ex-combatants from different factions graduated after their participation in an eight-months training course in metal fabrication and welding at the South Bougainville Research and Training Centre in Tonu. In addition, a two-week course that focused on saw milling, environment protection and land management took place; and a training course on conflict resolution, restorative justice and community development was delivered. In preparation for an official handover of the centre to the Board of Directors, the workshop was registered and then incorporated as a non-profit organisation with the Investment Promotion Authority of Papua New Guinea.
3. The Arawa Women's Vocational Training Centre (AWVTP) established. The centre ran a 26-week course with a curriculum covering 14 subjects ranging from guesthouse management to gender awareness and women's empowerment skills for women. The training centre includes a guesthouse where the students are able to apply the skills they have gained through the courses offered.
4. Arawa Research and Training Centre offered training courses in metal fabrication to youth including ex-combatants from different factions of Bougainville.
5. Sports and cultural events identified by the district councils have been actively supported to enhance communication among different population groups.
6. A Bougainville Youth Officer Congress was organised in June to bring all District Youth Coordinators together to exchange experiences in their work and to engage in joint programme planning. The congress significantly contributed to the promotion of inter-district cooperation and helped to transmit the idea of "one Bougainville youth". A follow up meeting is planned.

## Annex 2: List of organisations and individuals consulted

---

The following are the people and organisations who very kindly provided information during the research for this project.

### **United Nations**

#### **DESA**

Joop Theunissen -UN Focal Point for Youth

Charlotte Hess

Birgit Matten

#### **FAO**

Mohammed Farah - Country Director, head of NGO coordination (Sierra Leone)

#### **OCHA**

Valerie Julliard- Head of Regional Coordination office

Kazimero Jocondo- Head of OCHA (Cote d'Ivoire)

Jeanine Cooper- Regional Coordination office, Former Liberian NGO director.

#### **Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict**

Tonderai Chikuhwa

#### **UNAMSIL**

Victor Angelo -DSRSG

Peter Tingwa- Public Affairs Officer

Alain Hagoss- Political Officer

#### **UNDP**

Alberic Kacou - Resident Representative (Senegal)

Victor Angelo - Resident Representative Sierra Leone

Steven Ursino- Country Director (Liberia)

Nancy Asanga- Acting RR, Country Director (Sierra Leone)

Elizabeth Oduor-Noah Deputy Resident Representative (Liberia)

Goder Johannes- Head Community Based Reconstruction (Liberia)

Cleophas Torori- Youth Focal Point (Liberia)

Waheb Shaw- Youth Focal Point (Sierra Leone)

Mary-Beth McKeever- RR Specialist (Liberia)

Cheikh Tidiane Mbengue- Programme Officer (Senegal)

Graham Chipande- Head of Poverty Unit (Sierra Leone)

Kay Schwendinger- Partnership and Resource Mobilisation (Liberia)

Abbioseh Nelson William-Assistant deputy Resident Representative (Sierra Leone)

#### **UNHCR**

Moses Okello- Resident Representative (Liberia)

Andrew Mbgori- Reintegration Officer (Liberia)

#### **UNICEF**

Fatouma Hamadali-Protection Team Coordination (Liberia)

Sabine Himbine-Regional Protection Officer (Liberia-Sierra Leone)

Heimo Laakoneen-Country Director (Kenya)

Hazel de Wet - Project Officer, (Humanitarian Policy and Advocacy, Office of Emergency Programmes)

Theophane Nikyema - Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF Regional Offices in West Africa

Mima Perisic - Project Officer, (Adolescent Participation Unit)

Saudamini Siegrist - Project Officer, (Innocenti Research Centre)

Paul Hulshoff - Sr. Programme Officer,  
(Field Support and Inter-Agency  
Collaboration Section)

#### **UNIFEM**

Maha Muna, Programme Manager,  
(Governance, Peace and Security Unit)

#### **UNMIL**

Ibrahim Lewis- Head of Reintegration  
Programme

Dennis Johnson- Humanitarian Coordinator  
Sherrod Lewis - Legal Officer

Evariste Karimbizi- DDR programme

#### **UNOWA (Dakar)**

Andrew Gilmour

Florence Poli

#### **WHO**

Dr. Soeren Buus Jensen - Senior Mental  
Health Advisor (Liberia)

#### **World Bank**

Ian Bannon, - Manager Post-Conflict and  
Reconstruction Unit,

Viviana Mangiaterra - Children & Youth  
Advisor, Children & Youth Unit

James Sackey - Representative (Sierra  
Leone)

Luigi Giovine- Representative (Liberia)

### **Diplomatic missions and bilaterals**

#### **British Embassy**

Ian Stewart - Political Officer (Sierra Leone)

#### **European Commission**

H.E..Jeremy Tunacliff (Sierra Leone)

H.E. Jeffrey Bright (Liberia)

#### **European Council**

Christian Manahl -Africa Specialist  
(Brussels)

#### **GTZ**

Fabio Germano (Liberia)

Melanie Seegraef

#### **USAID**

Jack Myer -Regional Advisor (Senegal)

Zachary Rothschild – Office of Transition  
Initiatives

### **Government**

Minister of Youth and Sports- Dr. Dennis  
Bright (Sierra Leone)

Ministry of Development Cooperation-  
Francis Cisse (Sierra Leone)

Supreme Court Justice- Felicia Coleman  
(Liberia)

### **Non-governmental Organisations**

#### **Action Aid**

Tennyson Williams (Sierra Leone)

#### **Africare**

Patrick Mwangi (Sierra Leone)

#### **American Refugee Council**

Barbara Whitmore (Sierra Leone)

#### **Atlantic Philanthropies**

Nicole Gallant

#### **CARE**

Rachel Goldwyn- Regional Conflict Advisor  
(Senegal)

Nick Weber- Country Director (Sierra  
Leone)

Keith Smith- Country Director (Liberia)

Marc Sommers,

#### **Caritas**

Fr. Joseph Nyanti - Country Director  
(Liberia)

#### **Centre for Victims of Torture**

Beatrice Adams- Country Director (Sierra  
Leone)

#### **Christian Children's Fund**

Jonah Daidson- Country Director (Sierra  
Leone)

Wayne Bleier- Country Director (Liberia)

#### **Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum**

Stephen Jackson

#### **Cuttington University**

Professor Henri Tokpa- President (Liberia)

**Danish Refugee Council**

Gilbert Bouic- Country Director- Liberia

**Don Bosco Homes**

Allen Lincoln - Director (Liberia)

**Finnish Refugee Council**

Outi Perahouti- Country Director (Sierra Leone)

Markku Vesikko - Country Director (Liberia)

**International Rescue Committee**

Nicky Smith- Country Director Liberia

Jane Lowicki - Advisor

**Medecins san Frontieres**

MSF-H - Katrien Coppens ,(Sierra Leone)

MSF-H- Colleen Cowhick Country Director (Liberia)

**National Democratic Institute (NDI)**

Vandetta Sawyer - Country Director (Sierra Leone)

**Norwegian Refugee Council**

Trond Jensen - Resident Representativ (Sierra Leone)

Ellen Dahl - Country Representative (Sierra Leone)

Ellin Gjære - Country Representative (Liberia)

Hakan Ohlson - Reintegration Programme Manager (Liberia)

Johanssen Gunner-Education Programme (Liberia)

**Oxfam**

Miriam Deme- Regional Director (Senegal)

Hiroute Selasie- Regional Peace-building advisor (Senegal)

Johnathan Napier- Country Director (Sierra Leone)

Willy Kalanga- Programme Officer (Liberia)

**Right To Play**

Martin Van Der Wajt - Country Director (Sierra Leone)

**Save the Children**

Dieneke van der Wijk - Country Director (Liberia)

Christine Knudsen, Child Protection Specialist

**Search for Common Ground**

Michael Shipler - Coordinator, Children & Youth Programs

**Tufts University**

Angela Raven-Roberts

Dyan Mazurana

**War Child**

Meghan McBain- Country Director (Sierra Leone)

**West Africa Network for Peace-Building (WANEP)**

Samuel Doe- Regional Director (Liberia, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire)

Sampson Tornopilah - Country Director (Liberia)

**Wipnet**

Leymah Gboyee - Country Director (Liberia)

**World Vision International**

Janette Robinson (Sierra Leone)