Chapter 14.
YOUTH & CONFLICT

This chapter is divided into *five sections. Following the definition of relevant terms, the social, economic, political, health-related, psychological and cultural dimensions of conflict are explored and the frequent failure of preventive measures highlighted. Recent United Nations and other international instruments addressing the issue of conflict prevention and peace-building are then examined. A case study of Sierra Leone details the various elements of conflict as well as efforts to achieve and sustain peace, and recommendations that may help to deter future conflicts are presented. A conclusion offers a summary of the chapter's main points and an overall assessment of developments relating to youth and conflict.*

INTRODUCTION

Preventing violent conflict is imperative for development. While wars and violent confrontations are not new, the scale of violence perpetrated against civilians and the complexity of the emergencies occurring in the past couple of decades are unprecedented. During conflicts of such magnitude, masses of people are displaced after their homes and communities are destroyed, rapidly increasing the ranks of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) throughout the world.

Youth are often a targeted group during conflict. Young people's participation in armed hostilities is facilitated through the trade of small arms and light weapons. The dearth of opportunities in their communities often leads them to gravitate towards violent conflict and acts of terrorism. Many are successfully mobilized through the ideologies of war. As victims and witnesses, they cannot help but be affected by the grim realities surrounding them.

Traditional prevention mechanisms have proved top-heavy and ineffective in addressing the root causes of conflict and problems leading to the escalation of tensions. It is not surprising, then, that young people have taken on active roles and created youth networks to try to build peace and prevent outbreaks of violence. As one young Nigerian articulated, "The older generation has failed us, and we cannot continue watching while our future is being mortgaged."[1]

In response to the increasing prevalence of armed conflicts, the international community has incorporated in its peace-building agenda early warning and prevention systems to identify and address risks. However, the types of indicators and variables to be used for monitoring and evaluation are still under discussion. The new policies and approaches present major opportunities for progress. More importantly, the role of youth is now recognized as critical in creating long-term stability, producing effective outcomes within communities, and offering protection from future conflicts.

Defining various field-specific terms will allow a clearer understanding of the material to be presented. *Conflict* occurs naturally and involves two or more parties with differing interests and perspectives. It takes place at personal levels (between family members and friends and even within oneself) and at formal levels (between politicians, diplomats and businesses). It can also act as a stimulus for addressing complaints.[2] However, if channeled improperly, conflict has the potential to intensify
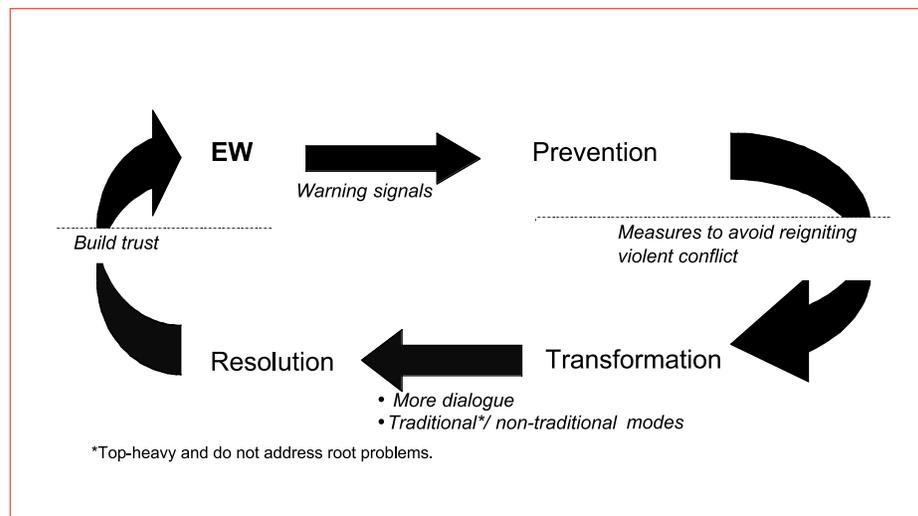
and erupt into violence. The focus of this chapter will be on *armed conflict*, which is an example of *violent conflict*. Armed conflict commonly refers to the use of manufactured weapons by different parties against one another, with at least one of the parties being the Government of a State.[3]

Early warning denotes "the systematic collection and analysis of information coming from areas of crises for the purpose of … anticipating the escalation of violent conflict; … the development of strategic responses to these crises; … and the presentation of options to critical actors for the purposes of decision-making."[4]

Conflict prevention involves addressing "the structural sources of conflict in order to build a solid foundation for peace. Where those foundations are crumbling, conflict prevention attempts to reinforce them, usually in the form of a diplomatic initiative. Such preventive action is, by definition, a low-profile activity; when successful, it may even go unnoticed altogether."[5]

Conflict transformation and *conflict resolution* work in conjunction with conflict prevention. While prevention entails maintaining peace before and after violence by correctly interpreting and acting upon early warning signs, conflict transformation involves shifting existing violence into constructive dialogue. Non-violent modes of conflict resolution can then be applied to achieve peace and prevent future conflicts through the use of early warning systems (EWS). Although the definitions of the two terms differ, they are often used interchangeably in peace literature and contain similar elements in their modes of application, such as the building of trust and reconstruction (*see figure 14.1*).

Figure 14.1
Cycle of peace-building during conflict

EW

Warning signals

Prevention

Measures to avoid reigniting violent conflict

Build trust

Resolution

• More dialogue
• Traditional*/ non-traditional modes

Transformation

*Top-heavy and do not address root problems.

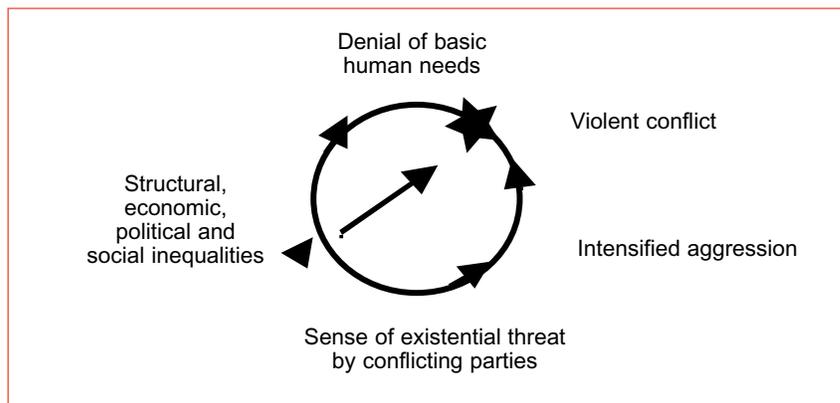# FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ARMED CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACT ON YOUTH

Young people today encounter greater and more unique challenges than ever before. During a crucial phase of their development, not only are they confronted with the biological and psychological growth processes that characterize youth and adolescence, but they must also grapple with formidable external pressures such as poverty, disease and violence. The eruption of war further compounds the adversities many face. Young people have much at stake, yet they have little say in the policies and activities that pertain to their lives.

Warfare magnifies existing impoverishment and despair. Between 1989 and 2000 there were 111 reported armed conflicts; seven involved fighting between States, and the remainder were internal disputes. All were characterized by the use of light weapons and small arms as well as decentralized fighting groups. The smallest number of new conflicts occurred in the year 2000. Unfortunately, this does not represent a decline in the overall total, as few of the disputes initiated in years past have shown any signs of abatement or resolution. The chances of ending prolonged armed conflicts are modest owing to their complexity and to negative experiences with peacemaking, as exemplified by Angola, Chechnya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. Regional politics often add to the complexity of these situations, as illustrated by the conflicts in the Balkans, Central Asia and Western Africa.[6]

A tally of recorded victories during the cold war brings into question the conventional wisdom of intervening in wars being fought for territorial gain; negotiations led to 34 ceasefires during the cold war (1946-1989), but conflict continued in 33 cases.[7] When EWS signal rising conflict, conveying the likelihood of such an outcome to inherent fighting parties could potentially be a valuable incentive for them to turn, instead, to non-violent modes of expression.

The debate over the precise causes and effects of armed conflicts continues. Many interlinking components—including social, health, economic, political, psychological and cultural factors—can lead to violent conflict (*see figure 14.2*).

Figure 14.2
Underlying roots of conflict

Denial of basic human needs

Violent conflict

Structural, economic, political and social inequalities

Intensified aggression

Sense of existential threat by conflicting parties

Source: United Nations, Department of Political Affairs, *Early Warning and Preventive Measures: Building United Nations Capacity*, Manual for the United Nations Staff College Project, Rev. 6 (2001), p. 34.

Social dimensions

Civilian casualties as a proportion of the total number of casualties of armed conflict have risen from 5 per cent during the First World War to more than 80 per cent today, and most of those affected are women and children. In the past decade, 2 million children have been killed as a result of armed conflict, and 6 million have been disabled, mainly through mutilation and landmine explosions. A total of 12 million have been left homeless, more than 1 million orphaned or separated from their parents, and more than 10 million psychologically traumatized.[7] For young people, survival takes precedence over education, environmental protection and other development issues.

The majority of warfare takes place in developing countries—particularly in Africa, where some of the highest numbers of child soldiers are found. An estimated 300,000 young soldiers, most of who are between the ages of 10 and 24, currently risk their lives in the course of armed conflicts. Their recruitment may be either voluntary or forced. Many are compelled to join through conscription, abduction and coercion. Their survival becomes a challenge as they face the dangers of violence and illicit substance use on a daily basis. Drug abuse becomes an integral part of their lives, shielding them from physical and emotional pain and forcing them to stay awake.[9] Another motive behind pushing drugs on child soldiers (and on repressed youth in general) is to subdue rather than resolve their pent-up frustrations. Drugs are used as an effective mechanism to control their actions and minds.

During warfare, girls and women encounter threats of rape, sexual mutilation and exploitation, trafficking and humiliation. Many are beaten regardless of their level of compliance with the demands of their attackers. Rape is common, and its after-effects serve as a constant reminder of the horrific experiences they have undergone. When the conflict ends, they attempt to overcome their own personal traumas and sustain the livelihood of their household members. Often, however, they do not receive the services that would help them deal with their situation, and integrated national policies give insufficient attention to factors that would help deter further violence, such as specialized education and training.

An inevitable result of armed conflict is the enormous flood of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs); the present count is approximately 50 million, according to UNHCR. They are regularly denied access to health care, education, income-generating opportunities and psychological counselling. Friction between them and local community members, who believe their resources are being drained by the influx of outsiders, adds more tension to their lives. Access to food and security both inside and outside camps is a major concern for refugees and IDPs. Often they lack the skills and coping strategies that could help them deal with their emotions and reintegrate into society. More than 80 per cent of the victims are women and children. They have to worry about not only basic survival and safety, but also sexual exploitation and diseases aggravated by war. The monitoring of food aid distribution by international donors is often weak, and structures tend to be established by male traditional leaders in groups of refugees, returnees and IDPs, placing the more vulnerable groups at the mercy of outsiders. The youth are often exploited and do not have access to appropriate measures or laws that could protect them and help secure their future livelihood.

Health dimensions

Approximately 3 billion people worldwide are currently without adequate sanitation, and 1.3 billion have no access to clean water.[10] During war, access to resources becomes even more difficult, particularly under unaccountable Governments. Health-care facilities are often destroyed during conflicts, and even in peacetime they are able to provide only rudimentary services owing to human and material resource constraints. Health indicators decline in warring countries with no social safety nets, and surveillance to control the progression of diseases becomes an arduous task.

Problems are intensified, if not triggered, by war. High mortality rates among women and children are further exacerbated during conflict. Countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Niger and Sierra Leone have the highest rates of infant and under-five mortality.[11] Preventable conditions such as malnutrition, malaria, acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea and measles account for some of the highest death rates. These illnesses are prevalent in war-affected areas such as Afghanistan, where 50 per cent of the children suffer from chronic malnutrition.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has contributed greatly to the disintegration of societies already under enormous stress. The disease has infected 34.3 million people worldwide, with an average of between 6,000 and 7,000 new cases among youth alone appearing every day, mainly in Africa and Asia. The rates have surged in areas of armed conflict. More than three-quarters of the 17 countries with the highest numbers of children orphaned by AIDS are engaged in hostilities or are on the brink of an emergency involving conflict.[12] The disease itself unravels the fibre of a society, affecting not only communities, but also national security,[13] as high rates of HIV infection in the military reduce the size and capability of the armed forces and place civilians in greater danger of contracting the disease.[14] Sexually transmitted infection rates (STI) are two to five times higher for the military than for comparable civilian populations during peacetime in most countries, and those with STIs are at a greater risk of contracting—and subsequently spreading—HIV. Infection rates among both soldiers and civilians jump dramatically during armed conflict[15] through systematic rape and large-scale population displacements. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the rate of HIV infection in the armed forces is known to be about 60 per cent,[16] the prolonged war led to the death of the parents of 680,000 children. In Ethiopia, at the end of the war with Eritrea, the corresponding figure reached 1.2 million.[17] In Colombia, child soldiers are vulnerable to HIV owing to sexual violence by older officers or pressure by peers to engage in sexual activity. In the five years following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, 2,000 women—the majority of whom were raped—were tested for HIV. Many had been sexually inactive before the genocide, yet 80 per cent tested positive.[18] Without access to information and services, these women will die, and the spread of the disease will weaken socio-political and economic foundations and effectively cripple the nation.

In some areas, the spread of the disease is insidious. Many in the general population are unaware of its prevalence, as some victims remain silent, fearing reprisals from their attackers or rejection from their families; others commit suicide to end their torment. Many face sexual prejudice and exploitation while they struggle to provide for

their families. Facilities and services to address associated physical and mental problems are seldom available, and those that are currently operating can be unfriendly towards youth in particular, discouraging them from seeking information about their health and receiving treatment.

Economic dimensions

Armed conflict affects education, social welfare and economic development and aggravates unemployment. Deficiencies in employment opportunities and social safety nets, including rationing systems and basic health services, generate more tension and leave civilians with limited options for a sustainable livelihood. In a wartime economy, the situation turns catastrophic as civilians are left to fend for themselves without sufficient State or international assistance. This places the youth population in a particularly vulnerable position, as they are the group most targeted for recruitment and abductions, and more likely to turn to black markets for survival and use armed conflict as a way to vent their anger.

At present, insufficient opportunities exist for young people to earn a living, substantially heightening their chances of facing poverty and turning to illicit activities. Of the 3 billion people surviving on less than $2 a day, approximately half are below the age of 24 and live in developing countries. Over 70 million young people are unemployed, and many more are struggling for survival on low wages and must endure poor (and often exploitative) working conditions. More than 1 billion jobs must be created by 2010 to reduce unemployment and accommodate young workers entering the labour force.[19]

Creating jobs for youth, while vital, is not sufficient to produce a level of economic development and stability that will ensure peace. There are other factors at the national and regional levels that work against peace-building through economic means. Internally, the absence of skilled workers—owing to, for instance, the prevalence of deaths from war, starvation and diseases such as HIV/AIDS—lowers the GDP of some nations, as exemplified in sub-Saharan Africa. In other places, the destruction of the country sets the economy back decades. This was the case in Lebanon during the 1990s, when GDP remained at about 50 per cent of what it had been before the troubles began in 1974. Conflict may affect resources as well, placing the welfare of the country's population at risk—as in the case of Angola during its civil war, where 80 per cent of the agricultural land was abandoned, greatly affecting the food supply.[20]

Economies are also affected by outside factors that threaten peace. The production and distribution of illicit drugs, tremendous in scope and highly profitable, often feed into armed conflicts. In many regions, the profits from trading in illicit drugs are used to fund fighting by insurgent and guerrilla groups. Violence is often employed to protect their business interests.

Some economists believe that the economic dimensions of war are the most important, taking precedence over other factors such as social grievances. According to a World Bank paper, a country is at risk of civil conflict if the primary commodity exports—diamonds, oil and agricultural products—comprise the greatest portion of the national income. The paper contends that a country in which commodity dependence reaches 26 per cent of GDP is prone to rebellion. The same country with no

primary commodity exports has only a 0.5 per cent probability of engaging in rebellion.[21] While this view provides interesting insights, it reduces the complexity of war to the economic interests of the insurgency groups. Further, it does not, for example, account for variables that contribute to the mobilization of the masses, who often receive little or nothing in the way of financial gains during or after rebellions.

Political dimensions

Democracy and political stability are closely associated with maintaining peace and preventing the eruption of violent conflict. The demise of countries is linked to the application of non-democratic tactics, which marginalizes groups of people and contributes to the inequitable distribution of resources. Non-transparent parties withhold or alter information on basic rights to benefit determined leaders, in the process breaching human rights laws.

Corruption, extortion and abuse are woven into the fabric of most political systems, signalling State failure. The greatest misappropriations, however, occur in areas in which the Government feels no accountability towards its subjects. Without established social safety nets, the struggle for survival may turn dangerous as people set out on desperate searches for food, risking their lives in the process, as exemplified in Sudan. This type of situation is generally reflected in low standards of living and in both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Signs of State failure and high levels of tension may be seen in indicators such as high mortality and low life expectancy rates, destruction of the environment, and "brain drain" (or capital flight). Some Governments, fearing an intensification of violence, establish formal or informal safety nets to meet the immediate needs of the populace.

Injustice and the lack of transparency in local and national governments create an environment in which corruption, covert markets and crime can take root and flourish. Youth often receive severe penalties for petty infractions, and no measures exist to challenge inappropriate judicial decisions, resulting in the marginalization of these young people. Mistrust is bred if neither the legal nor the traditional justice system can offer adequate means of settling disputes, making extrajudicial violence easier, as in the case of Colombia, where drug organizations illicitly control some security and justice officials to help protect their business interests.

Social learning processes, especially ideologies and cultural norms, underpin much of the violence. One way oppressive regimes seek to gain advantage is through the media, often controlled or threatened by the dominant political faction. Such regimes use mass communications to spread propaganda and divert attention away from outstanding issues. Leaders use emotional appeals—placed within religious, cultural and political contexts—to mobilize people; youth are targeted in particular, as they are more susceptible to ideological messages. Young people are especially vulnerable because they lack the necessary skills to communicate through non-violence. The media also transmit negative models that young people imitate. As studies show in Latin America and West Africa, perpetrators look up to gunfighters as their role models and mimic their behaviour because they can relate to the characters' convictions and portrayed emotions of an outcast.

Psychological and cultural dimensions

A major psychosocial cause of conflict is the repeated marginalization of particular persons or groups. As a host of people are excluded from the social, economic and political spheres, tension increases, and marginalization makes it easier for contending parties to cause individuals and groups to engage in extreme actions and mobilize others to act as perpetrators. The effects of marginalization differ for every individual and are linked to personal traits and environmental circumstances.

Historically, those who have become rebel leaders felt victimized and humiliated during an earlier period of their lives. They may have experienced repression, human rights violations, deprivation of needed resources and/or alienation. Their aggression appears to be a form of retaliation deriving from past feelings of indignity and degradation. A theory that closely examines the notion of humiliation underlying structural violence contends that one contributing factor is the absence of recognition and respect, which creates divisions between "masters" and "underlings" and feelings of humiliation. As the "underlings" rise to power, they engage in extreme acts, inflicting tremendous indignities and perpetuating the cycle of humiliation. This is particularly true in hierarchical societies such as Burundi, Rwanda, and Germany under Hitler's reign. Followers may be successfully instrumentalized with notions of avenging humiliation, where there may simply be frustration.[22] Examples of this are depicted in the Sierra Leone case study below but may also be seen in Colombia, the Philippines and Rwanda. When rebel leaders are in a position to vent their feelings through actions, the majority of the population is made to suffer, with many killed, wounded or exploited.

Similarly, youth and adolescents who experienced early aggression and a violent childhood are at the highest risk of perpetrating violence. Unaccompanied children[23] are both victims and sources of violence in Africa and Latin America. Studies indicate that uneducated youth and school dropouts are more likely to engage in violence and other behaviours that are detrimental to their health.[24] This is perhaps because they are less secure than their educated peers and feel inferior to or less capable than other members of the community—or, in a word, humiliated.

Youth and women are often marginalized in decision-making processes. At the local and national levels, they are expected to obey political and religious community leaders. At the international level, they have little say in the formulation and implementation of policies that are meant to protect their interests and well-being during peacetime and wartime. Nonetheless, they must endure the sometimes brutal socio-economic effects of these decisions, and their long-term needs are left unmet, as in the case of rape victims who do not receive health and counselling services.

During armed conflict, girls and women assume non-traditional roles as heads of households. Although it becomes their responsibility to produce meals for their families, during emergencies these individuals—many of whom are children and adolescents—are seldom consulted about issues related to food aid, nor are they informed when the deliveries they are depending on are delayed or cancelled.[25] These situations may easily be avoided by including them in the planning and execution of humanitari-

an aid procedures. Likewise, the women may be empowered through their inclusion in high-level decision-making processes. Their participation would most likely contribute to an improvement in social welfare and more equitable resource distribution.

As explained above, many variables are linked to the causes and effects of armed conflict (*see figure 14.3*). Clearly, these conflicts violate human rights from multiple angles. Most of the violence takes place in the poorest regions of the world, where a viable future for youth seems unlikely. Aggression and threats of violence break down societal structures. The increased stress and feelings of hopelessness that are indirectly linked to poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment and poor governance constitute part of a global pattern in areas of armed conflict. The higher rates of poverty, drug use and disease in these areas will have the most negative impact on poorer households and on youth, leading to separation from families, exploitation, child labour—and violence, with the fighting process used as a means of venting anger and frustration and assigning blame. Youth-sensitized conflict prevention and peace-building procedures may produce positive long-term results. By mainstreaming their participation in policy-making and formulating procedures, the impact of their current contributions to their communities can be expanded to reach larger segments of the population.

Figure 14.3
Fragmented dimensions of conflict
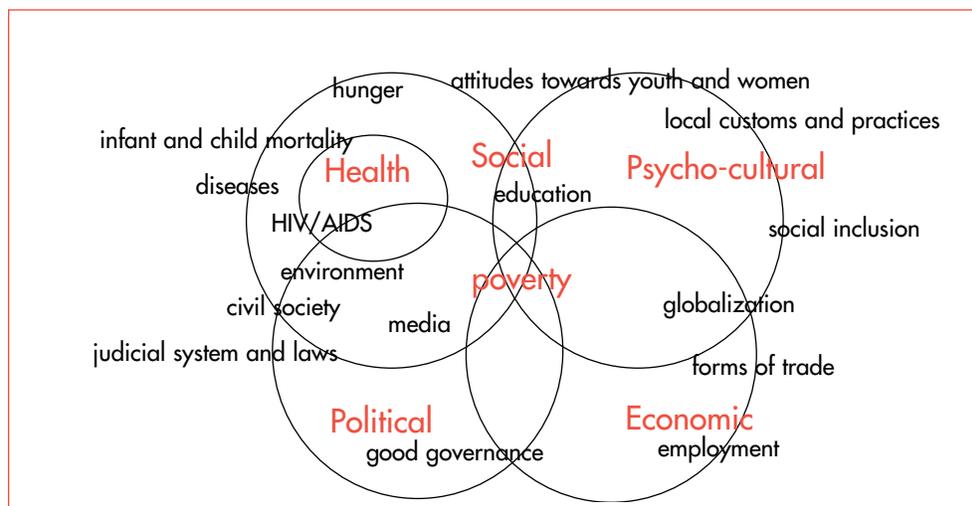
INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO YOUTH IN ARMED CONFLICT

Recognizing the critical importance of addressing prevailing trends and issues in the area of armed conflict, the United Nations has integrated relevant measures into mandates and reports dealing with other priority concerns, including reintegration and resolution, peacekeeping, disarmament, security and human rights. The importance of conflict prevention for youth at the domestic and international levels is reflected not only in United Nations resolutions, but also in the increase in funds (from private sector grants) for non-governmental conflict prevention projects.

Affirming the Organization's pivotal role in addressing underlying security and conflict issues, the Secretary-General pledged in a report released in 2000 "to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention", providing recommendations that covered a broad range of issues of concern to children affected by armed conflict.[26] A year later, he reviewed the United Nations' progress in developing conflict prevention capacity and issued a second report that upheld 29 recommendations formulated to help achieve this goal.[27] In support of the findings of a report prepared by Graça Machel in 1996 (described below), both of the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict stress the importance of incorporating child protection concerns into peace negotiations and practices during and after conflicts. They also emphasize the need for States to comply with the provisions of international instruments such as the Rome Statute, which deals with the prosecution of persons accused of war crimes and genocide, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child's Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which raises the minimum age of recruitment for compulsory military service from 15 to 18 years and bans participation in armed forces before the age of 18.[28] The intention of indicated measures such as consolidating these normative frameworks is to protect children from the impact of illicit activities and trade, re-recruitment, exploitation, abuse and HIV/AIDS, and to ensure their involvement in justice-seeking processes. Security Council resolutions 1325 of 2000 and 1366 of 2001 reaffirm that the Council's role in the prevention of armed conflicts constitutes an "integral part of (its) primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security". Beyond the Council's integration of conflict prevention in the maintenance of peace and security, a number of its earlier decisions—notably resolutions 1261 and 1265 of 1999—give full legitimacy to the protection of children in armed conflict and emphasize that the impact of conflict on youth has implications for global peace and security.

The impact of armed conflict is clearly outlined in the 1996 Machel report and in a detailed follow-up by the same author published in 2001.[29] Using the Convention on the Rights of the Child's framework of operative principles and standards as a guide, the 1996 report broke new ground, incorporating a complete and innovative agenda for action to improve the protection and care of children in situations of conflict.[30] The report described and assessed the situation of war-affected children, underscoring the plight of child soldiers, internally displaced and refugee children, child victims of landmines and sanctions, and the physical and psychological impact of conflict on children. Machel presented a preview of her 2001 publication at the International Conference on War-Affected Children, held in Winnipeg, Canada, in September 2000, reviewing the accomplishments since 1996 and recommending strategies to advance children's protection in armed conflict.[31] The new publication includes expanded coverage of small arms and light weapons, women's role in peace-building, peace and security, HIV/AIDS, media and communications, and education to promote peace. Earlier instruments referring to the impact of violence on youth—such as the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (1996) and the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes (1998)—affirm the importance of addressing these themes. A recent General Assembly resolution reiterates the importance of formal and non-formal education within the framework of the

International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World and recommends actions to promote safety and security at different levels.[32] All of these responses highlight the need for a comprehensive approach in preventing violent conflicts—an approach that includes the adoption of short-term and long-term political, diplomatic, humanitarian, human rights, developmental, institutional and other measures.

# SIERRA LEONE: A CASE STUDY OF YOUTH IN CONFLICT

Success in preventing conflict requires an understanding of the root causes of war, local capacities and interests, and the magnitude and type of provisions made by the international community. The present case study elaborates on the many dimensions of warfare and the impact of armed conflict on youth. It also shows that while young people are invisible actors during international negotiations, they play an important role in peace-building and conflict prevention.

The conflict

The conflict in Sierra Leone dates back more than 40 years but escalated in 1991 when the Revolutionary United Front launched a war near the border with Liberia to overthrow the Government. The army tried to defend the Government with the support of the Economic Community of West African States Military Observer Group (ECO-MOG). However, the following year, the army itself overthrew the Government. Two attempts were made (in 1996 and 1997) to implement a peace agreement, but both failed. Intensified restlessness led the Front and some dissidents in the army to invade and wreak havoc across Freetown, resulting in the deaths of more than 5,000 civilians on 6 January 1999.

Following this notorious event, a third attempt was made to resolve the armed conflict with the Lome Peace Agreement of 7 July 1999, which included special provisions for children. Initially, the ceasefire was successful, but the attacks and killings resumed, and demobilized child soldiers accompanied by ECOMOG were abducted once again. Non-United-Nations British intervention and the deployment of 17,500 personnel by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) to guarantee security for the Programme on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) helped stabilize the election and peace processes.[33] In the interim, the premeditated, systematic perpetration of violence left more than 200,000 people dead and countless others—mainly young people—maimed, mutilated, suffering the effects of rape, and distraught.

A combination of factors contributed to the prolonged armed conflicts and war in Sierra Leone. One was the lack of political equity, which allowed the exploitation of people through military dictatorships, government unaccountability and anti-democratic tactics. Another factor was the dire social situation, characterized by the inequitable distribution of resources, poverty, the lack of health care and safety nets, and high levels of illiteracy and unemployment. Sierra Leone itself was largely neglected and ignored, except by those attempting to exploit the country's diamond and mineral deposits.[34] Illegal gold and diamond dealings and the transfer of small arms and light weapons expanded the black market and marginalized civilians, providing a rationale for making violence acceptable behaviour. The
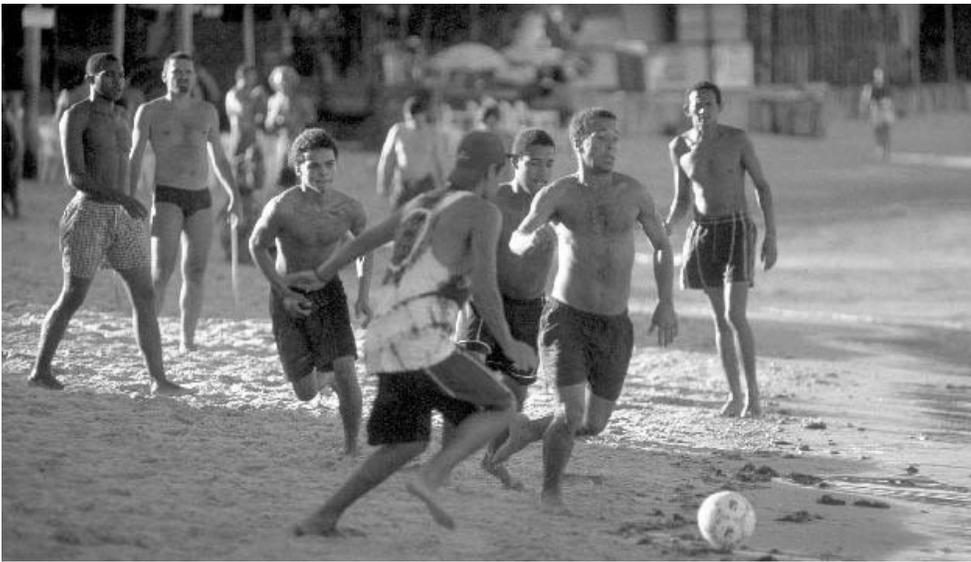
revival of multinational interest in diamond reserves, marked by the increased presence of foreign "security-cum-mining" companies, contributed to the black market expansion and fueled the conflict.[35]

The precarious state of their society dimmed any hopes young people might have had for a brighter future and better opportunities. In due course, the possession of arms was viewed as a means of subsistence by youth and child soldiers—and particularly by the footloose and often angry core members who faced educational difficulties and social exclusion.[36] Moreover, the rebel groups provided their soldiers with food when their own Government would not. Some perpetrators deliberately maimed and raped villagers and amputated limbs. Their attacks included humiliating community members in positions of authority as acts of revenge or demonstrations of power—expressions of rebellion against traditions that during peacetime had resulted in their ostracism.[37]

Through a strategy known as "de-institutionalization", youth were made to murder their own family members and neighbours, making them pariahs in their own communities. A number of perpetrators imitated well-known action heroes such as Rambo, placing bandanas on their heads, reciting lines from the movies and adopting the names of heroic characters. Others, some as young as seven, were forcibly recruited as child combatants and, along with their 18- to 24-year-old commanders, consumed drugs to perform the atrocious acts that destroyed their family and community bonds.[38]

During the war the development process was disrupted in Sierra Leone—a country that already ranks last in the human development index and that had a life expectancy at birth of 37 years in 2000.[39] The overall destruction of already inadequate materials, socio-economic resources and infrastructures, including schools and health centres, exacerbated uncertainties and placed youth, who had undergone 10 years of instability and violence, in an even more vulnerable position. In addition, the civil war produced more than 2 million IDPs and refugees—mainly young women and children—out of a total population of 4.9 million; more than 90 per cent of these victims are civilians.[40] Most are traumatized witnesses or victims or perpetrators—or all three.

Female social welfare, already poor to begin with, was further compromised during the protracted conflict. Polygamy (marrying multiple wives) and female genital mutilation have long been widely practised, subjecting the female population to major health risks. In 2000 the infant and child mortality rate was one of the highest in the world, and some 80 per cent of the general population had no access to adequate health services. The decade of armed conflict devastated the female population. Many have been forced to become heads of families but have only marginal economic, social and political opportunities. Education levels among women are low. In 1995, a few years after the onset of the war, illiteracy among females older than 15 stood at 82 per cent, versus 55 per cent among males older than 15,[41] making them more

vulnerable to mental and physical exploitation. While many sustain themselves through agricultural occupations,[42] reports indicate an increase in the number of commercial sex workers.

Physical violence, including rape and sexual abuse, was prevalent even prior to the war. The legal system did little to prosecute offenders, contributing to the widespread devaluation of women's human rights in the country. An effective EWS would have flagged this as an indicator of the probability of increased violence against women during periods of armed conflict. It is no surprise that today's evidence of war-related sexual violence perpetrated against young women and girls is overwhelming.[43]

Sexual violence during the war seriously affected a majority of the victims, resulting in the transmission of diseases, including STIs and HIV/AIDS, and producing unwanted pregnancies and mental and physical illnesses and trauma. Statistics on post-war trends show that rape and sexual assault in IDP and refugee camps remain high. The camps provide a fertile environment for the rapid spread of infectious diseases. The results of two separate reports indicate that the HIV rate among people below the age of 48 jumped from 68,000 in 1999 to 170,000 in 2001. According to one of the reports, prepared by UNAIDS, the estimated HIV prevalence rate for females aged 15 to 24 years was more than double that for young males.[44]

Under the country's constitution gender discrimination is illegal, a position reinforced by Sierra Leone's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the mandate established in 1998 that addresses gender issues and identifies the gaps in all development goals for programming and influencing national policies. In practice, however, there has been a failure to implement constitutional and CEDAW provisions at the domestic level, and women continue to face structural discrimination under the coexisting English, Islamic and customary laws. As in other war-affected countries with similar laws, such as Afghanistan, the impact of discriminatory inheritance is particularly appalling. The rise in female-headed households, the poorest in the world, creates survival dilemmas. In camps, women responsible for supporting their families are often faced with predominantly male aid distributors who coerce them into having sex in exchange for food and other goods.

A decade of lost educational opportunities, the disintegration of communities and families, and widespread unemployment all place a tremendous burden on the local, national and international communities. A State needs to be reconstructed, and this applies not only to its socio-economic infrastructure, but also to its human capital, distressed physically and emotionally from war.

At the international level, global advocacy against the recruitment of child soldiers is ongoing, with United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and religious groups playing a leading role. In 2000, during a visit by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Foreign Minister of Canada, the Government of Sierra Leone agreed to establish the National Commission for War-Affected Children, which was accomplished after some delay. The purpose of setting up the Commission was to translate the concerns of children into policy-making, priority-setting and resource allocation during peace consolidation and reconstruction.

After the sporadic fighting had been quelled and the end of the war was declared by President Ahmad Kabbah on 18 January 2002, thousands of small arms and other weapons were destroyed in a symbolic bonfire to mark the conclusion of the disarmament process and a new beginning. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission assumed responsibility for compiling an accurate history of the war and using the resulting document as an instrument of recourse for victims, assisting them in bringing responsible parties to justice and preventing future conflicts. Efforts to reconstruct Sierra Leone, reintegrate ex-combatants and disseminate information to help various groups were already under way. In the disarmament portion of the DDR programme for children, a central feature of the Lome accord, the registered count exceeded 60,000 child soldiers, who in exchange for their arms were promised three meals a day from the Government and allowances once a month.

Resolution and healing
International support

United Nations agencies on the ground supported interim care centres, where children were transferred upon the completion of the demobilization process. At the centres, health partners conducted routine check-ups and found that most of the children were suffering from illnesses such as malaria and STIs. Psychosocial support was provided to create a stable environment for them. Education and vocational training programmes were offered in conjunction with various forms of recreation including sports, cultural and group activities. In addition, a commitment was made to trace relatives and reunite children with their families as quickly as possible. The centres were frequently ill-equipped to work with higher-risk children suffering disproportionately from their past actions.[45] Addressing their needs, however, was vital for the prevention of future conflicts. As a former child soldier cautioned, "I am asking you to help us, or we are going to become rebels again, or thieves."[46]

Through a network of services, sexually abused girls who sought help received counselling, education, skills training and legal support. For girls and young women living on the street and engaged in commercial sex work, a separate programme was set up in Freetown offering a drop-in centre, education, family reunification and medical services. Not all abused girls have sought assistance, however, and identifying them has been difficult as some abductees have remained with their commanders for various reasons (including coercion or feelings of shame). Alternatively, some have returned anonymously to their communities to avoid further social degradation and the stigma attached to victims of rape and sexual abuse.[47]

NGO initiatives

Many NGOs have tailored their activities to the specific needs of the population at the grass-roots level. Young people themselves have been active agents in their communities—a trend evident in the number of NGO programmes run by youth themselves.

One international NGO,[48] Search for Common Ground, uses the media to promote conflict resolution through national and subregional dialogue. A radio network and youth network were mobilized for the May 2002 elections.[49] The Independent Radio Network (IRN) was formed when it became apparent that the Government and
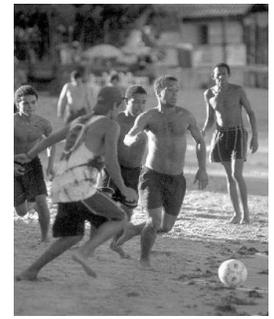
UNAMSIL bodies had no coordination mechanisms in place. Four independent FM stations were linked together to provide ongoing broadcast coverage of voting day. Search for Common Ground held workshops to prepare the journalists, teaching them the most effective methods of newsgathering, creating guidelines for reporting, and identifying appropriate behaviour to prevent tensions from escalating. The feedback on the IRN process indicated that it had added transparency to and increased confidence in the electoral process, reducing anxiety across Sierra Leone. The Network has remained in place to facilitate increased public awareness of and interaction with the country's political institutions and processes.

The commitment and capabilities of the youth network became increasingly apparent with their involvement in the election process and a wide range of conflict prevention activities. Young people (defined in Sierra Leone as those between the ages of 16 and 35) gathered from various areas to obtain accreditation and take part in the monitoring of the domestic elections. They helped with voter education and reached out to marginalized people to ensure their participation in the registration and electoral processes. The youth network has continued to engage in advocacy for peace and reconciliation in the country, addressing a wide range of issues using various means.

Further examples of community and countrywide initiatives—many carried out by and for youth, alone or in cooperation with other social sectors and organizations—are presented below.

Talking Drum Studio—Sierra Leone radio programmes have aired on all stations in the country. Some programmes combine entertainment with educational messages. For instance, the *Golden Kids News*, a show for children produced and presented by children from mixed backgrounds, includes discussions of their hopes and fears as well as the positive aspects of their country. *Home Sweet Home* uses a soap opera format to disseminate information to refugees about issues they will have to deal with when they return home. Other programmes, such as the *Common Ground Feature*, are more informational and aim to foster the process of peace-building and reconstruction by conducting interviews and covering stories that reflect the interests and concerns of the contending parties. This series creates a public forum, providing an opportunity for communication and delving into a wide range of topics that interest opposing groups—a step towards conflict prevention through dialogue and reconstruction.

Attempts to reconstruct social norms and build confidence among local and national community actors can be seen in programmes such as *Wi Soja en Police Tiday*, in which security forces (army and police representatives) are given equal airtime and community viewpoints are integrated. As part of the reconstruction and reintegration process, shows endeavour to assist their target audience by providing them with helpful information. *Salone Uman* is a show that collaborates with local human rights groups to identify and address key issues affecting the status of women in post-conflict Sierra Leone. Another show, *Troway di Gun*, is co-hosted by a retired colonel from the Revolutionary United Front and a senior trainer from the Civil Defense Forces who have both disarmed and are undergoing their own reintegration. This programme seeks to assist ex-combatants and provide them with details about the short- and long-term processes of reintegration. The specific objectives are to inform them about the

opportunities available through the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, to encourage them to be patient and work towards reconciliation with their communities and vice versa, to identify obstacles in the reintegration process that ex-combatants need to overcome, and to provide a forum for them to discuss their own problems.

The Sierra Leone Youth Advocate Programme (SLYAP), started by a young man in his twenties, operates according to the principle that empowering young people encourages them to become positive contributors to society and "rulers of their destiny". Aside from advocacy at various levels, the Programme has undertaken a number of projects. One involves mentoring youth by providing them with care and support. Other initiatives facilitate the reintegration of former child soldiers. SLYAP managed to open two primary schools that accommodate a total of approximately 145 children between the ages of 5 and 14. An economic development collective was started to provide women and youth emotionally affected by the war with an opportunity to develop income-generating skills and ensure their families' livelihoods. In partnership with other NGOs, the Programme provides one-on-one counselling to former child soldiers, and general aid is offered to youth in overcrowded refugee camps. To further the goal of empowering youth to be positive contributors, methods are applied to sensitize them towards civic responsibilities and peace-building. One way to achieve reintegration and harmony is through sports; coupled with peace-building curricula, athletic activity promotes the release of war-related tensions. This was shown to be true in a series of football matches in which youth from contending parties, including child soldiers and victims, played against each other as well as on the same teams. Although initially tensions were high between the players and within the crowd, by the time the final game arrived the ice had been broken and a friendly environment prevailed. The games forced victims and soldiers to cooperate and trust each other. The disarmed soldiers were allowed to interact with other community members and break down walls of defensiveness and feelings of marginalization and separation from those around them.

The Sierra Leone Chapter of the Society of Women Against AIDS in Africa promotes HIV prevention by disseminating information on the virus. In collaboration with other organizations and the Government, the Chapter also runs sensitization programmes and offers training and counselling services for a variety of groups, including those in high-risk brackets such as commercial sex workers. Prior to the war, the Society owned one of the largest resource centres.

Preventing future conflicts

It is too early to assess the impact of these and other activities in the case of Sierra Leone. Instruments of comparison for the various developments are either nonexistent or unreliable. However, several lessons have been learned and conclusions drawn by the international community from the post-conflict experiences with regard to demobilizing, reintegrating and preventing the recruitment of youth and child soldiers, as follows:

- There is a need to strengthen preventive measures. Educational opportunities, including the teaching of peace and tolerance, should be provided for all children, and interim care centres should be maintained for street children. Projects for which there is high demand, such as the World Rehabilitation Fund's income-generating and skill-building initiatives (supported by UNDP and other international organizations) need to reach greater numbers of people.[51]

- Advocacy work with local organizations, the media, former child soldiers, teachers, health workers, and religious and community leaders is critical.

- For demobilization, channels of contact with non-governmental armed groups need to be identified. Coordinated efforts among NGOs and international organizations could facilitate this process.

- In the reintegration of child soldiers, trust needs to be established before they can engage in a dialogue about their future. When reunification with relatives other than their parents seems to be an uncomfortable solution, alternatives should be provided.[52]

- While respect for native customs and traditions is considered tremendously important in Sierra Leone, as in most developing countries, local conventions should not be observed to the extent that the rights and protection of youth are jeopardized. Transitional periods offer a window of opportunity, otherwise unavailable during peacetime, to modify harmful traditions and empower marginalized groups, which primarily comprise women and children. According to local custom, for example, unaccompanied girls are absorbed into families; often they are forced to serve in households against their will, and they may be exposed to various forms of violence. Even if such customs are to be maintained, mechanisms need to be established to help these people and provide them with more promising prospects for the future; one option might be to establish a centre that furnishes them with educational and vocational skills and allows them to air their grievances confidentially.

- Increased youth participation at all levels, including within the political sphere, would help put an end to negative feelings towards traditional authority and governance structures. Media can assist in reconstructing trust by, for example, disseminating important information to a wide audience during elections. In addition, youth-oriented programmes should better assess the effectiveness of measures designed to address the needs of their stakeholders—by listening to them. Failure to listen means a failure to meet the needs of stakeholders. During a 1997 field visit to Bo, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children interviewed former child soldiers who had returned to civilian life with the assistance of various NGOs. Their comments strongly suggested that they needed youth programmes such as New Life Services that provided the spiritual consolation they sought.[53] However, no mention was made of a spiritual component in the any of the materials that described psychosocial care until somewhat recently. Even when this need is recognized, programme formulations generally leave spiritual demands to separate entities instead of integrating this component into the main agenda.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM
THE CONFLICT IN SIERRA LEONE

In order to gain more in-depth knowledge about best practices, the information void needs to be filled with indicators and disaggregated data on variables that may be addressed to determine which factors are likely to lead to violence. Such instruments would provide support for early warning and prevention mechanisms. Some general recommendations can be made on the basis of the experiences in Sierra Leone. As the fragile realities of global peace increasingly manifest themselves, concrete measures that focus on addressing problems to prevent future eruptions of violence become increasingly important.

For violence to be channelled constructively, the measures adopted must reflect consideration of all the dimensions of armed conflict and its underlying causes. In public forums, youth are often the least visible. However, their involvement in decision-making processes during conflict transformation and resolution can greatly reduce the likelihood of violent outbreaks. The views and concerns of all parties must be understood and taken into account, as any decisions that are made will affect not only individual groups or sectors, but also future generations and society as a whole. Youth communication forums are important as well, as they allow frustrations to be aired and channelled constructively. Young people's participation in programme implementation and needs assessment must be congruent in order to ensure optimal outcomes. Otherwise, youth will retreat from participation in the programmes, and the benefits will decline when their needs are no longer met. In formulating such programmes, it is highly recommended that they be approached from a holistic angle that incorporates physical, spiritual and psychosocial components and involves youth-adult interaction and peer mediation.

Appropriate conflict prevention mechanisms and EWS can jointly signal progression towards peace. Owing to their non-linear nature, conflict indicators that provide early warning signs are not easily measurable, and the data tend to be more qualitative than quantitative. Unlike poverty indicators, which can define income as an end point, conflict indicators are not linked to a clear end point called peace.[54]

Early warning guidelines remain incomplete, but any system must integrate cross-sectoral strategies to identify the factors contributing to violent conflict (including poverty, poor health, the absence of good governance and certain types of local activities). Based on national and regional indicators and activities, applications can attempt to forecast events more effectively. For IDPs and refugees in West Africa, for instance, the current stability of certain groups can be determined (and their future stability predicted) using education and political components.

An early warning system must facilitate the compilation, standardization, analysis and dissemination of information that helps strengthen collaboration and guide the design of customized programmes. Coordination between other warning systems and conflict prevention measures is vital, as this provides an overall picture that allows better monitoring and response, thereby decreasing the likelihood of conflict.
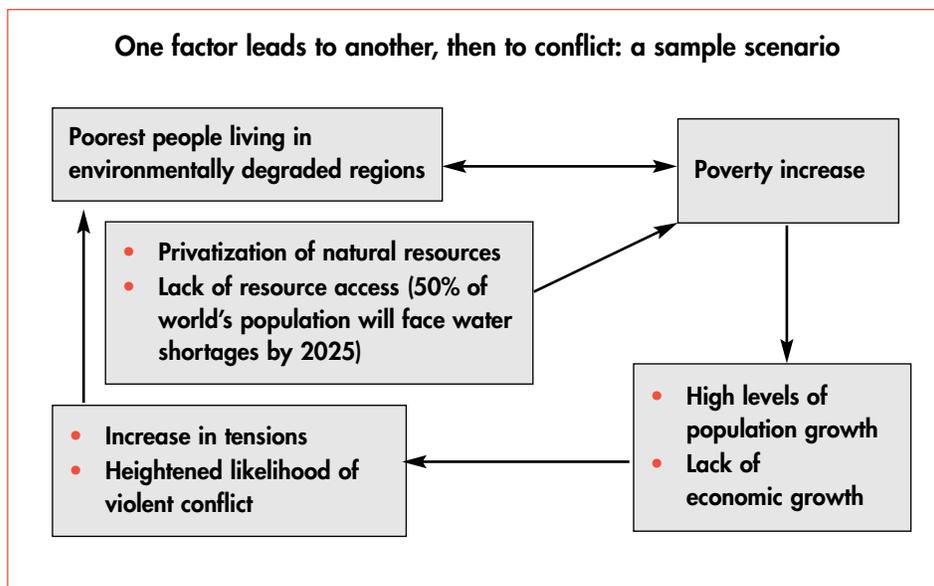
A principal factor determining the success of early warning efforts is whether the system maintains its integrity within communities, preferably through a checks-and-balances mechanism.

The likelihood of conflict decreases with the adoption of measures and the establishment of institutions that address basic needs, including youth-oriented NGOs, peace organizations, regional initiatives, programmes, humanitarian assistance, cultural activities, and common services such as health care. Conversely, the likelihood of conflict increases when destructive practices—such as the scapegoating of youth by the media, youth involvement in the shadow war economy (as child soldiers and traffickers), the exclusion of young people from peace processes and civil society forums, the short-term empowerment of youth, the expansion of extremist movements, and insensitive responses to youth concerns and crises by international actors—are allowed to continue.[55]

The examples above illustrate the important role youth and other community actors can and should play in preventive measures. Young people have become increasingly involved in addressing the indicators and circumstances of the escalation of violence (*see figure 14.4*), but they must also develop the skills and attitudes (appropriate within the local context) that enable them to handle conflict, which can be acquired through participation in decision-making processes and through education.

The skills that empower young people derive from formal and non-formal education. Through participation in training and cultural workshops, policy and advocacy forums, and peace-building mediations and institutions, opposing parties can learn to engage in constructive dialogue. Information campaigns can sensitize youth to the detrimental effects of violence. Peace and security education integrated in schools from an early age and maintained up through adulthood can teach students safety (especially where landmines are common), communication skills, and non-violent measures for handling conflict.

Figure 14.4
A sample scenario of the progression towards conflict

One factor leads to another, then to conflict: a sample scenario

Poorest people living in environmentally degraded regions ↔ Poverty increase

- Privatization of natural resources
- Lack of resource access (50% of world's population will face water shortages by 2025)

- High levels of population growth
- Lack of economic growth

- Increase in tensions
- Heightened likelihood of violent conflict

Post-war peace-building skills are particularly beneficial for ex-combatants and government officials (police, army and court personnel), who are prone to reverting to past behaviours. Non-formal education that teaches strategies for coping with post-conflict trauma is vital for areas in which rape and sexual violence have been used as weapons of war. In collaboration with local authorities and women's groups, Governments should provide regional, national and community-level education that promotes human rights for women. The needs of the victims may be addressed through health-care provision, psychosocial counselling (Western or traditional), vocational training and therapeutic leisure activities that are in accordance with local customs.

In order to have peace, society must be at ease with the idea of peace and be willing to maintain an environment in which it can be sustained. Shifting to a more peaceful orientation can be fostered through the use of conventional or unconventional tools that promote commonalities, facilitate reliance on non-violent channels for dealing with a wide range of intense emotions, and prevent violent outbreaks. While multiple-method approaches can increase the overall impact in many locations, their application should be guided by local determinations of their appropriateness and acceptability within the community environment.

Thus far, some of the most effective measures have included joint activities and projects (community centres and health-care services) as well as artistic, cultural and athletic activities (music, theatre, festivals and sports). Using existing local customs and practices (including traditional metaphors and symbols) to promote peace and understanding can also be extremely effective in resolving and preventing conflicts.

Mass media such as radio and television play an important part in promoting tolerance and dialogue. Inflammatory reporting that ignites violence needs to be replaced with new scripts and images that illustrate how conflict may be channelled constructively. Creative programmes similar to those produced in Sierra Leone can be effective means of transmitting positive messages and information. In addition to airing such programmes (features and soap operas), the mass media can promote public reward systems that encourage non-violent practices.

The impact on youth of trade in small arms and light weapons is well-known. Groups and initiatives such as the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and the Global Campaign against Child Soldiers advocate child protection, but procedures must be implemented to ensure that efforts in this area are not being neutralized by harmful business practices, including the sale and distribution of small arms and landmines and exploitative diamond mining. Adopting measures such as the Kimberley Process, which monitors the diamond trade so that revenues cannot be used to purchase arms and thus fuel conflict, help to deter illicit commercial activities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Between 1989 and 2000, 111 armed conflicts were reported in the world, with the majority occurring in the poorest developing countries—particularly those in Africa. Many involved internal disputes and were characterized by the perpetration of violence by groups using light weapons and small arms. Armed conflict has put many youth at risk of succumbing to violence. Currently, there are some 300,000 child and youth

soldiers fighting in 49 countries. There is no conflict without youth participation; indeed, young men constitute the majority in most armed forces. In the past decade, an estimated 2 million children and youth have died in armed conflict, and 5 million have been disabled.

Conflict prevention has become an international priority. Previous efforts have accessed peace-building strategies from a macro level, taken a narrow approach determined by top-level ideals of peace, and neglected cross-sectoral approaches. To understand the dynamics surrounding youth and violence, however, the underlying social injustices must be analyzed at various levels. Building a more complete picture of realities on the ground provides a solid foundation for the development of appropriate prevention mechanisms.

In implementing prevention strategies, injustices must be addressed not only in areas where armed conflict is prevalent, but also in areas where high tension levels threaten the security of civilians. To ascertain and address the roots of the problems that cause violent acts, conflict prevention and peace-building processes must incorporate efforts to identify the frustrations and interests of youth, who bear the brunt of these injustices, as well as those of other groups in society. Aid agencies and Governments must ensure the integration of religious leaders, teachers, youth, their relatives and other community actors in these processes, and each actor must take on specific responsibilities.

Conflict is one of the most complex issues the global community is facing today; its impact is apparent in every part of the world. Preventive measures have become an essential component of efforts to ensure a brighter future. Enabling youth to make major positive contributions is one way to minimize or neutralize factors that contribute to violence, increase global security, and prevent further armed conflict.

Exposure to violence during the formative years can have a defining influence on the character of young people involved in armed conflict—either as perpetrators or as victims. The effects of armed conflict on the physical and psychological well-being of young people, and on their future prospects for leading normal lives, are a cause for serious concern. Existing prohibitions against the use of child soldiers should be strictly enforced, and special attention should be given to protecting civilians, particularly children and youth, and preventing them from falling victim to conflicts. Notwithstanding these considerations, there have been numerous examples of young people taking part in activities that build peace, promote a culture of peace, and ultimately prevent conflict. These efforts should be strengthened and supported. ■

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3   M. Sollenberg, ed., "States in armed conflict 2000", Report No. 60 (Uppsala University (Sweden), Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Universitetstryckeriet, 2001), p. 21.

4   The definition comes from the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) "Thesaurus and glossary of early warning and conflict prevention terms", available at http://www.fewer.org.

5   United Nations, "Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations" (Brahimi report) (A/55/305-S/2000/809), para. 10.

6   M. Sollenberg, op. cit., pp. 7-14.

7   Ibid.

8   See http://www.globalissues.org/Geopolitics/Children.asp.

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10   See http://globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Facts.asp

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15   Ibid.

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18   UNICEF, HIV/AIDS Unit, "Fact sheet: HIV/AIDS and children affected by armed conflict"…

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22   E.G. Lindner, "Moratorium on humiliation: cultural and 'human factor' dimensions underlying structural violence", a paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on Structural Threats to Social Integrity: Social Roots of Violent Conflict and Indicators for Prevention, New York, 18-20 December 2001, pp. 1-9.

23   "'Unaccompanied children' are persons under eighteen years of age who have been separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so." (See http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/spain/learn_kids. htm.)

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26   United Nations, "Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict" (19 July 2000) (A/55/163-S/2000/712).

[27] United Nations, "Report of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict (7 September 2001) (A/56/342-S/2001/852).

[28] The age limit under the Protocol protects children under 18 and excludes a large group of young people over the age of 18; this issue has thus far remained unresolved.

[29] G. Machel, "Impact of armed conflict on children: report of the expert of the Secretary-General, Ms. Graça Machel, submitted pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 48/157" (A/51/306) (1996 report); and G. Machel, *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: A Review of Progress since the 1996 United Nations Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* (London, Hurst & Company, 2001).

[30] G. Machel, "Impact of armed conflict on children: report of the expert of the Secretary-General, Ms. Graça Machel, submitted pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 48/157"...

[31] G. Machel, "The impact of armed conflict on children: a critical review of progress made and obstacles encountered in increasing protection for war-affected children", presented at the International Conference on War-Affected Children, Winnipeg, Canada, September 2000, available at http://www.waraffectedchildren.gc.ca/machel-e.asp#ch14.

[32] This resolution followed two reports of the Secretary-General ("International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World" (A/56/349 of 13 September 2001) and "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World" (A/55/377 of 12 September 2000)), which provide an overall strategy for the implementation of the International Decade and for the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/243 of 13 September 1999).

[33] World Bank, "Sierra Leone: critical support for disarmament/demobilization: an analysis of the Bank's role in countries coming out of conflict", accessed on 13 February 2002 at http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/essd/essd.nsf/Post-Conflict/SierraLeoneDisarmament.

[34] In his article, "Blair's good guys in Sierra Leone", David Keen attributes young people's deep anger to the long-standing problems of mismanagement and exploitation. The proliferation of small arms and the level of anger are marked not only by the inability to isolate a group of Revolutionary United Front members to eliminate them, but also by the fact that new groups—such as the West Side Boys, who took British soldiers hostage in 2000—continually crop up. (The article appeared in *The Guardian* on 7 November 2001 and is available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/sierra/article/0,2763,589002,00. html.)

[35] P. Richards, "The social life of war: Rambo, diamonds, and young soldiers in Sierra Leone", *Track Two*, vol. 8, No.1 (July 1999), available at the Centre for Conflict Resolution web site: http://www.ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za/two/8_1/p16_social_life_of_ war.html.

[36] Ibid., p. 7.

[37] D. Keen, in *The Best of Enemies: A Study of the Sierra Leone War*, details the extent to which the youth felt marginalized—for example, by the community elders, who married several wives. Some of the perpetrators are said to have been young men driven away from the community because they were in love with some of the women. However, according to local traditions, these women had no choice but to marry the elders. Elders would neglect others (who subsequently became perpetrators) because they were not the relatives of a favorite wife. The aggression of the perpetrators (including the raping and maiming, and often the humiliation of community members, in particularly the elders) was an act of revenge and an assertion of their own power.

[38] D. Keen, in *The Best of Enemies: A Study of the Sierra Leone War*, and P. Richards, in an article entitled "The social life of war: Rambo, diamonds, and young soldiers in Sierra Leone" (p. 7) explain the parallels between the Revolutionary United Front fighters and Rambo.

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[40] M. Pratt, "Background document on the impact of armed conflict on women in Sierra Leone" (University of Sierra Leone, Peace and Conflict Studies Program, March 2002), pp. 4-5.

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[42] M. Pratt, op. cit., pp. 5-7.

[43] Physicians for Human Rights, with support from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), *War-Related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone: A Population-Based Assessment* (Boston and Washington, D.C., Physicians for Human Rights, 2002).

[44] Data were derived from the UNAIDS "Report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic: June 2002"..., p. 124; and Avert, an international HIV/AIDS charity, at http://www.avert.org/subaadults.htm, for the total for adults and children aged 0-49 years. The HIV prevalence rate among youth in 2001 was unavailable in either study.

[45] UNICEF, Office of Emergency Programmes, *Children Affected by Armed Conflict: UNICEF Actions*, advance copy (New York, May 2002), pp. 40-41.

[46] As stated by one of Sierra Leone's cub reporters, Stephen Swankay, who was captured at age 12 by the Revolutionary United Front and freed a couple years later. The article was published on 29 May 2002 by Agence France-Presse (AFP, Cairo) and featured in broadcasts by the Talking Drum Studio, and is available at http://www.sfcg.org/locdetail.cfm?locus=SL&name=programs&programid=307.

[47] UNICEF, Office of Emergency Programmes, *Children Affected by Armed Conflict: UNICEF Actions…*, p. 66.

[48] Search for Common Ground, information available at http://www.sfcg.org.

[49] See http://www.sfcg.org/locdetail.cfm?locus=SL&name=programs&programid=447.

[50] See http://www.sierraleoneyouths.org/slyap/mission.html.

[51] Refer to http://www.worldrehabfund.org for general information.

[52] Refer to Global Information Networks in Education; information available at http://ginie1.sched.pitt.edu/childsoldiers/sierraleone.html.

[53] M. Sommers, "The children's war: towards peace in Sierra Leone" (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, March/April 1997), available at http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/sl/sierra-leone_report.html.

[54] For additional information, see UNDP, Emergency Response Division, Governance and Rule of Law Unit, "Mainstreaming conflict prevention in the United Nations System, analysis and development programming: a review of Common Country Assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes" (October 2001), pp. 17-19.

[55] See S. Schmeidl with E. Piza-Lopez, *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action* (London, International Alert, June 2002).

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