

The Creation of Job/Work Opportunities and Income Generating Activities for Youth in Post-Conflict Countries

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Overview

Several countries in Africa¹ which find themselves in post-conflict situations have attempted to conduct large-scale demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants in an effort to create opportunities for sustainable peace and human development. Although demobilisation is closely linked to security issues, the impact of demobilisation also depends largely on whether former combatants, especially youth, are able to reintegrate into society. Ex-combatants usually have great difficulties in re-establishing themselves into civilian life. It is argued that frustrated former combatants may jeopardise the peace and development process. This paper examines the potential for the creation of work opportunities and income generating activities for ex-combatant youth in post-conflict countries in Africa as part of the reintegration process. Section I of the paper analyzes the economic challenges facing youth (including youth ex-combatants) in post-conflict societies, drawing upon specific case studies and examples. This is followed in section II by an analysis of the key challenges facing ex-combatants, in particular after they have completed the demobilisation and reintegration process. Section III analyzes the current policy environment with regard to job creation and income generating activities for youth (both ex-combatant and non-combatant) and identifies best practices and lessons learned in job creation for young people following protracted conflicts. The final section gives a summary of key issues raised in the paper and a set of policy recommendations for all stakeholders, in particular the UN, governments, donors and youth groups.

Understanding a ‘youth’ in the African context

The continuing debate on who is a ‘youth’ in Africa has not resolved the confusion surrounding this concept. Not only does the perception of youth vary historically and culturally, it also varies from one context to another and even within contexts (Osei – Hwedie, 1989; Mkandawire, 1996; 1997; 2000; Kanyenze, *et al.*, 1999; 2000; Schlyter, 1999; Bennell, 2000; Curtain, 2000; 2001; Argenti, 2002; de Waal, 2002a). Sociologically, ‘youth’ denotes an interface between ‘childhood’ and ‘adulthood’².

Generally, however, youth are defined in terms of chronological age. But, as Table 1 below shows, the age definition of age varies from country to country. This paper uses the 15 – 24 years age group as the definition of ‘youth’. We are using the term ‘youth’ interchangeably with ‘young people’.

¹ By Africa, we are mostly referring to sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). As used here, the term ‘SSA’ refers to African countries south of the Sahara desert (or ‘Black Africa’).

² It should also be noted that the notions of ‘childhood’ and ‘adulthood’ are socially constructed categories (Boyden, 1997).

Table 1: Definition of Youth Age, the Age of Majority³, and the Age of The Right to Vote in Selected African Countries

COUNTRY	YOUTH AGE	MAJORITY AGE	VOTING AGE
Botswana	12-29	19	21
Ghana	15-35	18	18
Malawi	14-25	18	18
Namibia	15-30	21	18
Seychelles	15-30	18	18
Sierra Leone	15-30	18	18
Tanzania	15-35	18	18
Zambia	15-25	21	18
Uganda	18-30	18	18
South Africa	15-35	21	18
Lesotho	12-35	21	18
Zimbabwe	15-30	18	18
Nigeria	12-35	18	18
Swaziland	12-30	21	18
The Gambia	12-30	18	18
Kenya	15-35	18	18
Mozambique	18-35	18	18
Mauritius	14-25	18	18

Source: Chigunta, *et al.*, (2005).

In conceptualizing youth, it is important to clearly disaggregate this age cohort. We cannot assume that young people from different sub-groups are affected in the same way by war or will respond in a similar manner to the same opportunities in a post-conflict situation, even when they might have the same potential.

Some of the prevalent youth sub-groups in Africa include: out-of-school/ illiterate youth; never been to school; youth with disabilities; urban/ rural youth; homeless youth; young people affected by armed conflict/ war (IDPs, ex-combatants returnees); migrant youth; refugee youth; youth under forced labour; orphans; girls and young women (single mothers); physically challenged youth; criminal youth; youth living with HIV/AIDS; and, indigenous youth and other minorities. These categories suggest that the youth cohort is characterized by inherent duality and contradictions which are engendered by cross-cutting variables and dichotomies.

As in the case of youth, defining who one considers ‘combatants’ (and subsequently, when the war is over, ‘ex-combatants’) is not always easy. Not only is the notion of ‘combat’ itself problematic, but definitions of its protagonists – the ‘combatants’ – are also contested (Gear, 2002).

Traditionally ‘combat’ refers to the activity of armed military engagement with an enemy. But, as Gear (2002) observes, combat is not a homogeneous experience. Arguably, ‘combatants’ also include those who are not on the ‘frontline’, but who, for example, are located at base camps engaged in a variety of military-related activities. This implies that a definition of ‘combatant’ should not only include those with experience of combat training or active involvement in combat, but also those involved in logistical support should be considered as combatants.

³ The age at which most civil rights are accorded to young people.

‘Combat’ is also a highly gendered notion. It is constructed mainly as a distinctly male affair, in which masculinity is solidified and reified.⁴ Noteworthy too is that the term ‘ex-combatants’, in some contexts, is associated specifically with liberation fighters, and does not serve as a blanket term for all the former soldiers who participated in a conflict.⁵

For the purposes of this paper, ‘combatants’ are defined in relation to their proximity to acts of, and possibilities for, collective physical violence. By implication, ‘ex-combatant youth’ are those young people aged between 15 – 25 years who were involved in, or close to, possibilities for collective violence. Thus, our focus is on both male and female youth irrespective of their proximity to the war front. Our interest here is to understand how these youth are affected by the war and the economic situation in post-conflict situations.

I. The Economic Challenges facing Youth in Post-conflict Environments

The effects of wars in Africa are felt throughout society. Several scholars (Cramer, 2002; Green, 2002) have observed that the economic costs of war in Africa are particularly high due to intrastate conflict. However, there are analytical and methodological tensions in the literature on the economic consequences of conflict in Africa (see Cramer, 2002). Nonetheless, this has not stopped many observers attempting to quantify the costs of conflict.

A review of literature shows that conflict has had pervasive effects in Africa (Cramer, 2002; Green, 2002; Collier and Sambanis, 2005). In a conflict situation, resources are usually diverted from social and economic investment and recurrent spending towards the war effort. The damage that follows an outbreak of conflict compounds the problem. As a result, the costs of war are very high in terms of gross domestic product (GDP); livelihoods; infrastructural damage; institutions; human capital; social capital; residual instability; and, above all, lives lost. However, the relative significance of these factors vary widely by country.

Cramer (2002) estimates conflict-related GDP losses in Africa at over US\$100,000 million, with about half of this being in southern Africa (excluding South Africa) and the rest concentrated in central Africa, the Sudan and the Horn. Current and cumulative GDP losses relative to territorial output are also very high in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and were so during much of the 1979-81 and 1981-6 conflicts in Uganda. In Mozambique, national output in 1992 was less than what it would have been in a non-conflict situation. A similar situation obtains in other post-conflict societies like Rwanda and Burundi.

The largest source of output loss comes from lack of maintenance of infrastructure and equipment and investment worsened by the destruction of existing capital stock. In Rwanda, for example, a year’s tea and coffee harvests were lost in 1994, and vandals had left all the tea factories and about 75 percent of the country’s coffee-depulpers inoperable (Cramer, 2000).

⁴ It depends on a division between the ‘protector’ (men) and the ‘protected’ (women), and the soldier’s masculinity is defined in relation to his ability to perform in a combat situation. As a result, women are kept well away from the ‘combat’ terrain. The gendered construction of combat is particularly true of conventional armed formations.

⁵ In Mozambique, for instance, the term ‘ex-combatants’ refers to veterans of the liberation war and excludes former RENAMO soldiers (Kingma, 2000).

Loss of livelihoods is often higher (as a proportion of pre-war livelihoods significantly damaged or wiped out by war) in rural areas. In extreme cases, as in Mozambique, Angola, the Sudan, over half of all rural inhabitants have been displaced by war or become refugees with low to negligible livelihoods. By the late 1980s, the civil war in Mozambique had not only caused enormous damage but also had disrupted over 50 percent of the countryside, while nearly one million people had been killed and 4.5 million made refugees and/or displaced (Chachua, 1999; Mause, 1999). In addition, an estimated 250,000 children had been orphaned or separated from their parents. In the Darfur region in the Sudan, the current conflict has displaced over one million people and killed over 250,000.

The loss of livelihoods results in severe poverty, especially in rural areas. In Mozambique, the majority of the population lives in poverty. Although the economy has been growing rapidly in recent years, poverty still remains pervasive. A similar situation obtains in Rwanda where the social structure (demography, social capital,) has been severely disfigured and eroded by the war and genocide. In 2004, Rwanda was ranked 159th on the UN human development index (HDI) ranking, making it one of the poorest countries in the world (see Box 1). Similarly, Burundians are among the world's poorest people, with a per capita income of \$117 in 1999 (Ngaruko and Nkurunziza, 2005).

Sierra Leone is the least developed country in the world according to the United Nations Human Development Index. Before the war people in Sierra Leone were very poor. But the war compounded this situation. Ten years of a brutal civil war resulted in desperate poverty, homelessness and lack of basic facilities in the country. A similar situation obtains in Liberia and Congo DRC.

However, the situation in South Africa is different. Although post-apartheid South Africa may also be classified as a post-conflict society (Malan, 1996), it has a large and sophisticated economy. It is, therefore, at an advantage relative to most African countries with small and weak economies. Moreover, because the level of armed conflict on South African soil was extremely low, there are no obvious, physical signs of a conflict-torn country, as is the case in Mozambique, Angola, Rwanda, Congo DRC, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Nevertheless, the psychological scars of years of internal political conflict, though less visible, cannot be ignored in South Africa.

It is evident from the above discussion that the effects of the war, which are various and shall continue to be felt for a long time, have wide implications in the economy of a post-conflict country, and possibly of the region and of society in general. The destruction of the infrastructure capable of dynamising the national economy, and the sabotage of transport and communication links, of energy facilities, of the social infrastructure, negatively impact on the development of an economy capable of meeting the needs, especially employment needs, of young people.

Youth unemployment

In a context of declining growth and economic restructuring, and especially in post-conflict societies, the problem of youth unemployment in Africa has become critical and labour absorption problematic (Curtain, 2000; ILO, 1994). It is difficult to provide accurate statistics on youth unemployment in developing countries, especially Africa, as available estimates of employment and unemployment face the conceptual and design limitations imposed by definitional and measurement problems of 'employment' and

‘youth’. Nevertheless, existing estimates indicate that in SSA, unemployment affects between 15 to 20 percent of the work force (ILO, 1994). As previously noted, these estimates indicate that young people comprise 40 to 75 percent of the total number of the unemployed.

Box 1: The Socio-economic Situation in Post-1994 Genocide Rwanda

Rwanda’s poverty situation is severe, with over 86 percent of the population living below the poverty line (under US\$ 1), and was further aggravated by legacy of genocide; high population density; high prevalence of HIV/AIDS; and, severe environmental degradation. In terms of livelihoods, the economy is largely agrarian, with about 90 percent of the population dependant on agriculture. Rwanda’s population is predominantly young, with 67 percent of the national population of 8.1 million people under 25 years. This has implications for young people’s livelihoods. It is estimated that over 100,000 young people enter the labour market every year (i.e. become of working age), of whom just over one percent are able to find gainful and sustainable employment. This implies that the economy cannot absorb the ever-increasing population of young people, which constitutes a crisis situation that requires urgent attention. In the post-1994 genocide period, the Government has attempted to seriously address problems facing the youth. However, efforts to address the problems this work are hampered by lack of reliable statistics on youth, especially youth employment. Moreover, budgetary allocation to the Directorate of Youth is insignificant relative to other sectors.

Sources: Cramer, 2002; Chigunta, 2005.

The levels of youth unemployment vary from country to country but are generally double and sometimes triple the adult rate. Unemployment in Africa has affected youth from a broad spectrum of socio-economic groups, both the well and less well educated, although it has particularly stricken a substantial fraction of youth from low-income backgrounds and limited education in urban areas. The problem of unemployment is particularly critical for young women. Girls are often disadvantaged in the labour market because of the perceived conflict between employment and family and the limited range of casual opportunities they offer (see Okojie, 2003).

The causes of youth unemployment in SSA are complex and multidimensional. In general, they can be categorised into demand and supply side factors (see Kanyenze, *et al.*, 1999; Chigunta and Mkandawire, 2002; Okojie, 2003). They include inappropriate skills, poor economic growth, and growing youth populations.

In rural areas, issues of resource access (including inter-generational conflicts), exposure to natural hazards, and agricultural development predominate. In these war-torn areas, sustainable systems of indigenous agriculture and resource management have been destroyed or displaced. In Rwanda, expanding landlessness, dramatic reductions in life opportunities for most poor Rwandese, and corruption and clientilism among the elite, all helped create a rural life that has been characterised as a prison without escape in which poverty, social inferiority, and powerlessness have combined to force youth to migrate to urban areas.

The growing concentration of youth in urban areas

In Africa, urbanisation, mostly involving young men, is a growing phenomenon. Urban migration is particularly high in conflict or post-conflict countries. In Mozambique, the intensification of the war in the rural areas forced the population to seek refuge in the cities (Mausse, 1999). Prior to the 1994 genocide, Rwanda was one of the least urbanised

countries in the world but now has the world's highest urbanisation rate. In Sierra Leone, one of the biggest challenges facing the government is how to convince people to leave Freetown. People stay because they believe there are more job opportunities and facilities in the city.

In urban areas, rural migrants are confronted with problems of unemployment and lack of shelter, thus forcing them to live in squatter camps. In these camps, residents are involved with petty trade, urban and peri-urban farming, and a range of small-scale enterprises and service-based activities. Young migrants and refugees, thus, play increasingly important roles in Africa's thriving urban informal sector (*see Section III*).

However, there is a very strong sense of marginalisation among urban African youth. These young people have turned out as agents of their own socialization in the street where they spend most of their time. The situation of young people is not helped by the absence of strong supportive institutions. Existing studies suggest that little or nothing is being done to replace disintegrating social support institutions, including the family, school, kinship structures, and public institutions with new forms of effective socialisation, social welfare and social control in many African countries (see Bennell, 2000; Chigunta, 2006). In the absence of such control, young people are generally alienated from mainstream society and mainly end up in streets where they create their own social worlds and fashion new social orders (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999).

But life on the streets is generally hard. Denied legitimate means of earning a living, the street youth, who are brought up in a sub-culture which facilitates the acquisition of criminal values, are more prone to criminal behaviour (Abdullah, 1999; Mkandawire, 1996). They are less inclined to be involved in begging because such assumes an inferior social position and is perceived as less aggressive. They, therefore, tend to earn their livelihood by a set of ingenious variation of petty trading, casual work, borrowing, stealing, pick-pocketing and other illegal activities. Some are on alcohol (most of it illicit brews); others are on drugs, such as marijuana (dagga), valium and mandrax. Glue and petrol sniffing are also widely (ab)used by these youth (Mtonga and Mkandawire 1995).

The emerging literature on youth and conflict in Africa suggests that youth culture, in particular the problem of unemployed and disaffected youth, plays a significant role in the African conflict experience (Abdullah, 1999; Zack-Williams, 2001). Although some young people and children have been abducted and coerced into fighting for rebel groups, there is now evidence to suggest that some are volunteering to join the rebel groups (Rwaboni, 2002).

The social background of youth combatants as street children and lumpen youth has become a major characteristic of the current phase of youth militarisation in Africa. This is visible in the predominance of a 'lumpen culture' manifest in the widespread use of drugs, indiscriminate violence and the general indiscipline of the fighting forces. In Sierra Leone, for instance, young fighters, such as those belonging to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the 'West Side Boys', were often high on drugs and alcohol.⁶ The lumpenisation of the fighting force is reflected in widespread horrible violence, large-scale torture of civilians, pillage of infrastructure and mass looting of public and private

⁶ The 'West Side Boys', for instance, used raw cocaine and jungle roots to make a lethal combination called 'ju-ju' which was rubbed into sores cut on the bodies of the fighters to give an 'instant high' (Daily Mail, 28th August, 2000).

property.⁷ Entire societies in war-torn countries are exploding and those suffering the most from war are children and women (Kopoka, 1999). Even where there is no civil war, the marginalisation of youth has given rise to conflict. In the Niger Delta in Nigeria, for instance, militant youth, frustrated by their exclusion from the benefits of oil, attack oil companies, hijack personnel, and lay waste to villages believed to harbour oil reserves, leaving many homeless.

It is, therefore, important to consider the context within which civil strife and the disintegration of society is occurring in Africa. Although the causes of conflict are more complex, the available data suggest that there are a variety of reasons why the youth are challenging the traditional political elite for control of the state. It is our contention that a key reason is the social exclusion as well as the political and economic marginalisation of young people arising from both the collapse of social institutions (such as education) and failure of the formal economic system to generate sufficient means of livelihood opportunities for young people. Clearly, the state is failing to respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of its youth which make up the majority of its population.

Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatant youth in Africa

The dispersal and rehabilitation of ex-combatants through reintegration into civil society is currently the primary focus of attention in the contemporary discourse on post-conflict military demobilisation (Kingma, 1996; Malan, 1996; Lamb, 1997; Chiachua, 1999; Mashike, 2000; Cramer, 2002; Harsch, 2005). Typically, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes – ‘DDR’ – as the process is commonly known – include the provision of some short-term social reintegration assistance. The distinction between where demobilisation ends and social reintegration begins differs from country to country which tends to lead to a degree of confusion.

In terms of the literature, most authors seem to agree that demobilisation and reintegration are volatile issues (see Lamb, 1997). It has been observed that if these two processes are not effectively managed, then the ex-combatants may once again take up arms with the result being the scuttling of the entire peace process (Mashike, 2000; Cramer, 2002). However, if the DDR process is expertly handled, they can create opportunities for sustainable peace and human development.

Several demobilisation exercises – mostly after civil wars – have taken place since the late 1980s in several SSA countries such as Mozambique, Namibia and Uganda (see Table 2). Similarly, Sierra Leone has had to deal with the enormous problem of reintegrating large numbers of children and young people who were either abducted by rebel and government forces or who joined the local Kamajor militias. Other African countries such as Liberia and Angola are currently conducting or preparing for demobilisation.⁸

⁷ These drugged youngsters have often been linked to widespread destruction, looting and atrocities in war-torn African countries (Kopoka, 1999).

⁸ In Congo DRC, the President has requested support from the European Union for a scheme that would lead to the abolition of the entire army and alternative employment for soldiers in construction and farming.

Table 2: Recent Demobilisations in Africa

Eritrea	48 000 former fighters were demobilised in 1991-1994
Ethiopia	almost half a million soldiers of the defeated Mengistu army were demobilised in 1991; between 1992 and 1994, another 22 200 fighters of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were demobilised
Mozambique	70 000 soldiers of the Government forces and 20 000 of the RENAMO opposition forces were demobilised in 1992-1994
Namibia	All of the about 30 000 people fighting for South African forces in Namibia and 13 000 combatants of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) were demobilised in 1989
Uganda	36 350 soldiers were demobilised between the end of 1992 and October 1995

Source, Kingma, 1996.

Post-conflict demobilisation and efforts to support reintegration are usually part of a broader process of reconciliation, nation building and the strengthening of civil society. The United Nations (UN) also recognises the demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants as critical parts of post-conflict peace building, and has made demobilisation part of its agenda.

Demobilisation is usually conducted under time pressure and comes in various forms, including food and cash payments. Despite the fact that reintegration efforts are usually less visible than the demobilisation itself, reintegration generally appears to be the major challenge in the overall process. All the demobilised and their families have to build up a livelihood – often after many years in the military.

However, former combatants face a number of challenges which make it difficult for many of them to pursue alternative sources of livelihoods in a post-conflict situation. Below we identify some of these challenges.

II. Key Challenges facing Youth Ex-combatants in Africa

The following are some of the major challenges facing ex-combatant youth in post-conflict societies.

a) Stigmatization from the community and social exclusion

The stigmatisation of ex-combatants and their social exclusion from the community, which is common in post-conflict societies, represents the hidden costs of conflict. According to Gear (2003), ex-combatants in post-apartheid South Africa regularly report alienation from those around them.⁹ A similar situation obtains in other post-conflict societies like Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, Angola and Burundi.

There are many reasons for the stigmatisation and social exclusion of ex-combatant youth. In Mozambique, ex-combatants were often seen by other community members as killers and as people that would only solve their problems through violence (Mungoi, 1999).¹⁰ In Sierra Leone, relatives were afraid to receive their children back from armed groups because of their involvement with the rebels (Bennett, 2002). As Lundin (1996)

⁹ This may play out at a range of levels and in different ways – in the family, community and broader society. Common across former force divisions are complaints of being stigmatised as violent, dangerous and criminal.

¹⁰ According to Lundin (1996), when the emotional and physical distance between loved ones is an armed conflict, with the physical and psychological violence that implies, the task of reintegration is enormous. Lundin cites the case of Mozambique where this situation involved children being removed from their communities forcibly by acts of war, being beaten, mistreated, raped, starved and commanded to kill even close relatives.

observes, it is difficult to reintegrate into the community someone who has been away for a long time; to forgive and forget evil deeds; and to spend time together again after being so long apart.

Fear of retribution also contributes to the reluctance of families to receive back their children. To quote Sallay Sam, 18, from Sierra Leone:

“The moment I go there they would talk to me but they would not be pleased to see me because since I left the village they would think I joined the rebels to do evil things. They would fear me.” (Bennett, 2002, p.47).

Similarly in Liberia, many children, including girls, were afraid of returning because they had been forced to commit atrocities in their own villages. As Bennett (2002) observes, this practice was adopted by the rebels to cause disruption to relationships between child soldiers and the local communities so they would not be able to run away from the armed group and go back to their homes. This has contributed to the stigmatisation of child soldiers as ‘barbarians’.

In most post-conflict situations, many girls are reluctant to go home for fear of rejection and stigmatisation due to their involvement with the rebels and their history of sexual abuse. Girls who have children with the rebels feel they have no choice but to stay with their ‘husbands’ as that is their only option for survival. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, the patriarchal nature of the culture places stigma on females who have sex outside of marriage. The culture also attaches great stigma to the loss of virginity outside of marriage and prostitution is deeply abhorrent in several societies.¹¹ The case of Sarah Kanu, 18, from Sierra Leone is illustrative here.

“They think bad about me because they don’t like the lifestyle I took up during the war. I started during the war as a sex worker at age 14 before I was captured by the rebels” (Bennett, 2002, p.48).

Females also suffer from the stigma of having children outside of traditional rites and customs and from association with commercial sex work. These children also face many obstacles in their development.

Lack of viable communities into which to integrate is another problem (Harsch, 2005) Bennett (2002) notes that family reunification is not always possible because families themselves have been further impoverished by the conflict and cannot take responsibility for feeding, housing and clothing ex-combatants. The damage to infrastructure further compounds the problem.

In many cases, this is accompanied by the collapse of social institutions. In Mozambique, the ideological indoctrination of youth played a significant role in their social exclusion. The youth combatants were taught to reject traditional institutions as ‘feudal’ (Chachiua, 1999). This led to a breakdown of the social and family networks.

The personal and social costs of the continued stigmatisation and social exclusion of ex-combatant youth are huge and the impact magnifies with the duration of stigmatisation (Mungoi, 1999). The costs include shame, boredom, frustration, stress, depression, family tensions and breakdown, crime, erosion of confidence and self-esteem. Others are severe

¹¹ Prostitution and sexual bartering have become a survival strategy for many girls and young women compounding the problems they already face with more unsupported pregnancies, children and reproductive health problems including STDs.

financial hardship and poverty, debt, drunkenness, drug abuse, violence, homelessness and ill-health.

b) *Post-conflict traumatic disorder*

This is another hidden cost of conflict. In areas of chronic conflict and insecurity, a generation(s) of youth have been left with significant psychological and social problems. As Mungoi (1999) observes, ex-combatants carry images from the past that are difficult to forget. This creates mental trauma. Prof. Emmanuel Nnadozie, in an interview with the author, observed that ex-combatants have difficulties as they have been oriented towards a culture of violence for long periods of time.¹²

“Most of them joined the rebel movements and started killing when they were young. But it is not easy to kill a human being. Images of the dead will haunt you for a long time to come!”

While responses to combat situations (and types of conflict experience) vary enormously, many ex-combatants struggle with trauma. Gear (2003) notes that the impact of trauma fundamentally undermines their attempts to make alternative ‘post-conflict’ lives. Scant awareness of the nature of trauma on the part of ex-combatants themselves and those around them, makes the experience additionally frightening and exclusionary. In these circumstances, the psychological adjustment of ex-combatants appears to be hard – it is usually difficult for former combatants to adjust their attitudes and expectations (Kingma, 1996). Thus, large numbers of the demobilised ex-combatants suffer from psycho-social problems due to post-traumatic stress disorder. According to Kingma (1996), a very high incidence of this disorder is believed to exist among former combatants in Angola and Mozambique. In South Africa, Gear (2003) discovered a profound sense of betrayal among ex-combatants, and – to differing degrees - is articulated across diverse former-force categories.

Gear (2003) stresses that the issue of identity also emerges as central to many ex-combatants as they struggle to reconcile their pasts with current realities. Society demands them to build ‘new’ identities but offers little support for doing this and little acknowledgement of what such processes involve or of past roles and identities (and the continuities, discontinuities and ruptures from these). Rather, conflictual relations tend to be reproduced or arise in new configurations. At the same time, valuable opportunities and energies for transformation, consolidating social capital, and peace-building may be lost.

In Sierra Leone and Liberia, most children abducted by rebels experience difficulties associated with trauma. Some are prone to violent outbursts. According to Bennett (2002), families often feel they are re-living their own experiences of trauma through the violent behaviour of the young people and reintegration breaks down. A wider problem caused by this trauma is exacerbated by the numbers of ex-combatant young people who are idle and on the streets in the communities.

In the case of young women, sexual violence and its consequences for separated and abducted females is an issue of serious concern. Many girls who had been raped during the war did not report the incident to any one because of feelings of shame or fear of

¹² The author interviewed Prof. Nnadozie, a senior economic affairs officer at UNECA, Addis Ababa, on 29th September, 2006, at Sheraton Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa.

being stigmatised.¹³ As previously noted, females involved in prostitution also suffer from feelings of shame and know they are subject to the double stigma related to sexual activity outside marriage and selling of sex.

Drug addiction is another problem. Many of the child soldiers have been drugged by commanders in order to make them more compliant and need treatment for addiction. They have suffered traumatising experiences which tend to result in their low self-esteem.

Several scholars have observed that ex-combatant youth want to become useful citizens but the impact of trauma fundamentally undermines their attempts to make alternative 'post-conflict' lives (Bennett, 2002; Gear, 2003). In particular, these youth have no skills to offer and limited job opportunities which combined, further limits their ability to function fully in society and to gain a greater sense of dignity, social relevance and self esteem.

c) Lack of skills training

In post-conflict situations, a generation(s) of youth are left with few skills and education. The duration of involvement in conflict implies 'exclusion' in relation to detachment from educational and labour markets arenas where state-sanctioned social and political capital may be accumulated. This makes it difficult for the fighters to acquire socially useful skills.

Former combatants with few skills face large problems in societies where it is difficult to start a small enterprise or to find employment. In most cases, many of them remain un(der)employed for extended periods of time. As a result, the vast majority of former fighters have problems in securing a livelihood and finding housing. However, the situation differs in other countries. In South Africa, the end of apartheid divided the ex-combatants into 'winners' and 'losers' (Mashike, 2000).¹⁴

Generally, there is recognition among ex-combatants that skills training is important. In Sierra Leone, a survey revealed that most needed skills training in order to have a good life. Ex-combatants in other countries have expressed similar views, with some saying that they would want to complete their education.

However, the war tends to destroy most educational infrastructure. In Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, and Rwanda, most schools and colleges across the country had been completely destroyed or significantly damaged. What educational activity was taking place was housed in temporary structures with volunteer teachers who had access to no resources.

d) Unemployment

There is a close relationship between lack of skills and the employment of ex-combatant youth in countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, Congo DRC. As previously noted, unemployment among young people cuts across all social and economic strata. Both educated and non educated youth find it difficult to find jobs, and very often when they

¹³ In Sierra Leone, Liberia and other countries, thousands of women and girls have suffered rape and sexual assault as these practices were widely adopted by all fighting forces involved in the conflict.

¹⁴ According to Mashike, winners were those who pursued and acquired some level of education during their service in MK, while losers were those without an education. The winners could further be divided into those who were integrated into the new army because they met the criteria for integration, and those who sought alternative employment.

find them, the remunerations are grossly low; working conditions for most of them are poor; jobs are unpredictable and insecure; the few available opportunities often do not match the possessed skills; and opportunities for young people to rediscover and harness their potentials are hardly if ever available. These situations perpetuate lack of self-confidence among young people, which also limits their productivity and career prospects. It is observed, however, that the uneducated, female and rural youth are more disadvantaged than their educated, male and urban counterparts, and this has implications for the design of remedial interventions.

Unemployment among young people is not only a concern for the economy, but has implications for security and the ongoing efforts of reconciliation and sustainable peace building (Harsch, 2005). It has been observed that large numbers of weapons remain or fall in the hands of former combatants and other people. In Mozambique, many arms caches were never reported to the UN which was responsible for collection, storage and destruction of weapons (Kingma, 1996).¹⁵ As a result, large numbers of weapons have ended up on the black market.¹⁶ A complicating factor in disarmament and arms control is that, in several parts of Africa, particularly in the Horn of Africa, ownership of arms is culturally accepted.¹⁷

An additional threat to security after demobilisation is caused by unemployed former combatants trying to apply their fighting skills elsewhere. There are many reports of the involvement of mercenaries in conflicts in several African countries. Mercenaries are often implicated in the most violent activities during these conflicts and the most severe violations of human rights. Many of them originate from armies that have recently contracted.

But, as discussed later, even for those ex-fighters who manage to complete their schooling or vocational training, the future is not necessarily assured. Most post-war economies remain exceptionally weak. Employment is limited, and few people can afford the services of the newly trained carpenters, auto mechanics or plumbers.

Other challenges

There are other constraints in the rehabilitation and resettlement of former combatants and returnees. One such constraint is caused by the presence of landmines in the areas where they would want to resettle. The exact location of mines is often unknown, and they continue to threaten to kill or maim indiscriminately, long after a ceasefire. Land mines are estimated to kill more than 12 000 people in Africa each year. The problem is

¹⁵ Kingma notes that disarming soldiers and guerrilla fighters is complicated, since many own more than one weapon. So, if they turn in one, another may be hidden elsewhere.

¹⁶ According to Kingma, the price of an AK-47 automatic rifle can be as low as US \$14 in Mozambique, while the same weapon fetches between US \$400 and US \$500 in South Africa. It has been estimated that there are as many as six million AK-47s in Mozambique alone, while in Angola it is one million. The availability of 'uncontrolled' light weapons causes dangers at different levels. The risk increases that disputes between individuals are settled with deadly violence. These weapons could also fuel banditry; and political groups could easily arm themselves and disturb non-violent and democratic political processes. It has happened that former combatants picked up these weapons when reintegration failed or when political problems flared up again, such as in Angola after the election in 1992. It is believed that some of the hijacking of trucks heading to the west of Ethiopia is perpetrated by former Dergue soldiers dressed up as government forces. In Mozambique, former Renamo fighters are blamed for frequent armed attacks on vehicles.

¹⁷ In some areas a man without a gun is not considered a 'real man.'

particularly bad in Angola. Estimates of the number of mines in Angola alone range between nine and twenty million. The presence of land mines has serious implications for the involvement of ex-combatants in agriculture. It will take decades and a massive human and financial effort to clear all these mines and allow all potential agricultural land to be used.

Female youth and reintegration

Reintegration programmes generally do not specifically consider female former combatants, their children and the wives of former combatants. Women have usually acquired new roles during wars, and men often expect them to return to their traditional roles. Thus, reintegration sometimes creates tensions. In several countries, including Sierra Leone, women are discriminated against in all forms of law, English, Islamic and Customary. Inheritance practices discriminate against widows. Across Africa, girls have less access to education than boys as it is assumed they will take the role of housewives and mothers only.

Young women in developing countries are also known to be especially vulnerable to health problems, such as sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) that are compounded by inadequate health care and education as well as poverty. While these development challenges may seem overwhelming, at the same time women are emerging as leaders in many very contemporary and youthful cultural fields, including art, literature and music.

III. Policy Environments – Job Creation in Post-conflict Societies, Options and Opportunities

The range of challenges discussed above suggests that there is a need for governments to create an enabling environment that facilitates comprehensive DDR processes, with a strong focus on the reintegration of ex-combatant youth in both rural and urban areas.¹⁸

Rural areas

Based on interviews with various stakeholders, such as Prof. Amos Sawyer¹⁹, former interim President of Liberia, the author reached the conclusion that the potential for growth, and therefore employment creation, in rural areas lay in the following:

Agriculture

There is great potential for the involvement of youth in agriculture in SSA. As used here, agriculture includes farming in all its branches. Among others, this includes the cultivation and tillage of soil; dairying; the production, cultivation, growing, and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodity; and, the raising of livestock, bees, or poultry.

Although rapid urbanization is fundamentally changing the face of Africa, agriculture remains the lifeblood of the continent, not only as a source of income for farmers, but

¹⁸ According to Maskike (2000), the most commonly used reintegration mechanisms are cash payments, counselling (employment and psychological), vocational training, apprenticeships, formal education, job generation, support for job-seeking, access to land, credit, technical assistance, and support in identifying market needs.

¹⁹ In an interview with the author at Sheraton Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa, 29th September, 2006.

also as a source of inputs to processing, manufacturing and retail businesses that account for most employment in towns, and as the source of food for growing urban populations.

However, the agricultural sector in Africa is presently characterised by:

- Low productivity
- Rudimentary farming techniques, and
- Dense land occupation.

In several post-conflict countries, ex-combatant youth have expressed a strong desire to go into farming (Harsch, 2005). In Liberia, the 500 ex-combatants at the Dupont Road project and the more than 1,000 in the LOIC's six rural centres reflected some interest in farming. To quote Mr. Kpawulu, a local activist:

"Liberia is an agricultural nation...We have vast lands, underutilized. We are unable to feed ourselves. So it is better to conscientize the young people to learn to farm." (Harsch, 2005, p.9).

There is potential for rural youth in the following branches of agriculture: livestock production; dairy farming; high value crop production; and, agro-business.

a) Livestock production

There is great potential for youth to go into livestock farming. At present, Africa, in comparison with other developing regions, suffers from a shortage of livestock products (Upton, 2002). Only in the southern parts of Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland) do supplies of meat and milk per caput exceed the developing world average. However, the supply of eggs even in this sub-region is well below the world average.

Different systems are associated with different livestock species or types. Grassland-based systems are entirely dependent on ruminant livestock, such as cattle, sheep and goats, which can easily digest green fodder. At the other end, most landless systems in Africa are based on pig or poultry production.

According to Upton (Ibid.), the main meat sources in Africa are cattle (41 percent), sheep and goats (22 percent) and poultry (25 percent). At present, pig meat is relatively unimportant in Africa (9 percent), while, on average, for all developing countries, pigs provide 42 percent of all meat supplies.

Depending on where they want to settle, ex-combatant youth in Africa can be given training in livestock production and management. In particular, the youth can be assisted to go into poultry and pig production which appear relatively easy to undertake. Increasingly, nowadays, young people are going into dairy farming with support from organisations such as Heifer International.

Disease problems are the major constraint in livestock production. The substantial scope for raising productivity through cross-breeding is indicated, however, by huge differences in productivity between breeds for each category of livestock. In some parts of post-conflict countries, land mines can also be a problem.

b) High value crop production

The growing view is that there is need to involve young people in the production of high value crops. These crops fetch relatively high prices both on the domestic and international markets which can lift the youth out of poverty. In Uganda, some youth have gone into the production of vanilla which fetches a high price on the international

market than traditional crops. In Kenya, some young people have gone into horticultural production and they grow a variety of vegetables. Similarly in Zambia, some young people in the Gwembe valley run viable banana plantations, from which they derive viable and sustainable livelihoods. Young ex-combatants can also be involved in growing traditional crops like maize and rice, as currently the case in Liberia.

Youth have gone into farming as individuals. However, young people can be encouraged to form cooperatives or associations through which they can assess agro inputs and market their products. Governments or donors are more likely assist the youth when they form associations or cooperatives. But such youth should be given locally applicable business management training on how to run organisations. The history of cooperatives in some African countries is one of failure.

In some cases, rural youth have benefited from out-grower schemes. Large agro companies, such as those involved in sugar, cotton and tobacco production, promote out-grower schemes in rural areas in order to boost production. Rural youth can be assisted to benefit from such schemes.

There are, however, some constraints to the participation of youth in crop production. The major constraint is lack of access to land. In several African countries, especially small countries with high population densities like Rwanda, Burundi and Malawi, access to land is particularly difficult for young people. Other constraints include age discrimination, lack of training in agriculture, lack of access to financial capital and equipment and lack of adequate support schemes.. As noted above, land mines can also be a problem. Where the major constraint is lack of access to land, as in Rwanda, youth can be encouraged to go into off-farm agricultural activities which can allow them to add value to agriculture, such as fisheries.

c) *Agriculture through value-addition (agro-business)*

Given the existing constraints to direct participation in primary agricultural production, youth in rural areas in Africa can be assisted to go into value-adding off-farm activities. These activities constitute what we call 'agro-business'.²⁰ Agro-enterprises provide value-adding goods and services and take inputs and /or outputs to and from farmers.²¹ In this paper, the terms 'agro-business', 'agri-business' and 'agro-enterprise activity' will be used interchangeably.

The promotion of agro-business can provide a catalytic force in poverty reduction through employment creation. Experience from a number of countries (including China, Chile, Brazil, Thailand, Taiwan, and Mexico) shows that agro-industry can be a powerful source of growth, diversification, employment creation and poverty alleviation. However, competitive agro-enterprise activity does not emerge spontaneously. It requires a resourceful, market-oriented private sector that is willing and able to bear commercial

²⁰ We view agro-business as those activities and functions which deliver material inputs to the farming sector and transform, distribute and otherwise add value to food and fiber products, yet are not directly involved in primary production and natural resource management.

²¹ They make and sell inputs to farms, process crop and livestock products, wholesale and retail fresh and processed products to consumers, and/or process and sell raw materials to other industries. These enterprises can be large or small, domestic or foreign, public or private, or a mix. They can be corporations, cooperatives, family-based enterprises or single proprietorship. Hence, they are governed by varied sets of rules. Their technologies and specialities also vary.

and other risks, and a facilitative enabling environment comprising policies, rules, and infrastructure.

The potential for youth employment in agro-business in Africa is huge. For the SSA region as a whole, it is estimated that agri-business GDP is just under US\$70 billion (World Bank, 2004). Although this is significant in the African context, this figure is marginal in an international context. The estimated agri-business GDP of Thailand matches that of the entire SSA region, while that of Brazil is nearly four times the African total.

In addition to value-addition, the promotion of agri-business has the potential to spur the industrialisation of rural areas in many African countries through the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In particular, the youth-run enterprises in agro-business can play an important role in the following:

- Farm machinery repair
- Farm product processing
- Food product trade, and
- Other agro-business functions.

Agro-enterprise development can also create additional employment or entrepreneurship opportunities through large multipliers in rural areas. In zones where there has been progress in commercial agriculture – cum – agro – industrial development, rapid growth co-exists with other services and manufacturing activities that are not directly related to the agro-food system, but are stimulated by the growth (and /or investable surplus) from a boom in agro-enterprise activity. Examples include the horticultural zones of Kenya.

However, a supportive infrastructure for youth would be needed in order to facilitate their entry in agriculture. This raises the issue of challenges that young people face in agro-business. A review of literature (see Chigunta, 2006) suggests that, weighed against the promotion of youth entrepreneurship in agri-business, are several factors:

- Youth normally have a muffled or silent voice in processes that re-write the rules of the game in agri-business. The interests of older and more powerful commodity systems actors may or may not be consistent with those of youth or small enterprise
- Youth could be disadvantaged in accessing services necessary for their operations given the small nature of their operations
- Lack of access to institutional capital means that young people are not likely to engage in lucrative segments of agri-business. Also, youth often lack the collateral to raise capital and guarantee loans.
- Lack of access to specific infrastructure (especially sorting sheds, assembly points, etc) that are necessary for small enterprises to meet the quality requirements of the large buyers is likely to disadvantage youth entrepreneurs,
- Young people may also not possess the necessary marketing skills
- Young people may also lack risk management skills, and
- Some youth may lack the necessary experience and business networks necessary for success in this field

In addition to these challenges, it is important to consider other factors that arise from an array of demography, social, technology and economic trends that are impacting on global agri-business. These include demographic change, increasing consumer sovereignty, emerging technologies, multilateral trade liberalisation, growing monopolies, internationalization and privatization of standards, and subsidies. (see Annex I)

These trends, both individually and collectively, pose major challenges to the competitiveness of Africa's agro-food systems and to the enterprises that youth can form. Those who compete best in agro-business will be those who understand customer needs and wants, those who can employ skills and technologies to gain efficiencies, those who can deliver goods in the quantities and timing schedules required by the western supermarkets, and those who forge reliable and mutually supportive relationships up and down the food chain. This means that the winners will be those who have the skills, who are well informed, and who are well organised. At present, this is not a common description of the youth and small enterprises working or seeking to work in agro-business in Africa.

Tourism

In Africa, tourism is mostly a rural-based sector with great potential for youth employment creation in rural areas. The major opportunities for youth are in tour guiding, crafts and art, restaurants, and transport. However, exploiting these opportunities is likely to be limited by the following factors:

- Limited support incentives and guidance from authorities
- Lack of skills training
- Inadequate knowledge on how to effectively identify and exploit available or profitable opportunities
- Poor infrastructure, and
- Negative international image of Africa and constraints on foreign visa access.

At present, it is not clear the extent to which youth participate in the tourism industry in Africa. But any attempt to promote the participation of youth in the tourism industry should ideally address the above issues.

Renewable energy technologies

Another sector with potential for youth employment creation is the growing field of renewable energy. Renewable energy is now increasingly seen as an alternative to conventional sources of energy such as coal and oil. The consumption of these conventional energy sources is one of the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions (with 55 percent carbon dioxide content). Despite their adverse climatic impact, the global demand for energy sources like oil is growing as growth increases in countries like China and India. While the practical considerations of world energy supply are particularly complex, a key option to address the problem is the promotion of renewable energy technologies (RETs).

With current high oil prices, it is not surprising that many African governments, such as those in Rwanda, Zambia and South Africa, are trying to promote the use of RETs.

The current absence of reliable and affordable electricity in on/off – grid areas has been recognised as one of the critical barriers hampering rural development and employment opportunities in Africa, as electricity is an important input in rural development.

Therefore, the provision of electricity in rural areas could:

- Stimulate agro-processing and other agricultural activities
- Stimulate commercial activities (such as trading centers and information/communication)
- Improve the quality of public sector activities (in health, education and public administration), and
- Improve the quality of life in the household.

This situation suggests that there is urgent need to increase accessibility to electricity in rural areas. In particular, promoting RETs offers a number of advantages over conventional sources of energy. (see Annex II)

These advantages make renewable energy technologies suitable for many African countries, most of which have the following characteristics:

- Favourable climatic conditions
- Rich in energy resources like sunshine, wind and water
- Largely rural, and
- Have low incomes.

Promoting the participation of youth in renewable energy technologies offers distinct opportunities to involve youth as service providers in a number of areas, including:

- Equipment sales
- Service provision
- Installation of equipment
- Maintenance of equipment
- Assembly of equipment
- Manufacturing, and
- Biomass plantations and energy farms

Other job opportunities for youth, especially educated youth, in renewable energy exist in the following areas:

- Providing skills training
- Design and planning
- Consultancy, and
- Research and Development

At present, youth energy entrepreneurship in renewable energy is still in infancy. Although the RETs are gaining acceptance in Africa, their contribution to the overall energy balance is still insignificant. This implies that the potential of renewable energy to create new job opportunities, especially for young people, remains largely untapped.

The low participation of rural youth in renewable energy entrepreneurship can be attributed to a number of barriers such as lack of information, technical and entrepreneurial skills, capital and the high cost of equipment (see Annex III).

The challenge is for international organisations like UNIDO and YES, working with national governments, youth organisations and other stakeholders, to address the above barriers in order to promote youth entrepreneurship in renewable energy. There are good funding opportunities for technologies designed to abate carbon dioxide emissions. Young people in Africa should, therefore, be assisted to access the Global Environmental Fund (GEF) and similar funds that have been introduced to encourage the use of clean technologies.

Urban areas

In urban areas, the opportunities for promoting employment creation and income generating opportunities for young people, in particular youth ex-combatants, are largely different from those for rural youth. The major pathway to the economic empowerment of urban youth is entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial schemes

There are a number of benefits from the promotion of youth entrepreneurship or self-employment that are commonly discussed by commentators (see, for example Blanchflower and Oswald, 1998; Fowler and Collins, 1991; White and Kenyon, 2000; Grierson, 2002; Kapitsa, 2002). It is argued that entrepreneurship has a number of potential benefits.

At global policy level, the need to promote youth entrepreneurship has culminated in the convention of a panel on the Youth Employment Network (YEN) by the Secretary General of the United Nations as well as a civil society-driven Youth Employment Summit (YES) held in 2002 in Alexandria, Egypt. Both the YEN and YES have identified entrepreneurship as a key priority in the promotion of youth livelihoods and employment.

At a local level, this has resulted in the emergence of a discourse on 'youth livelihoods and entrepreneurship' in much of Africa in recent years. This discourse has led to the introduction of Entrepreneurial Skills Development Programmes (ESDP) in countries ranging from The Gambia and Nigeria in West Africa, to Malawi and Zimbabwe in Central Africa, Swaziland in Southern Africa, and Uganda and Kenya in East Africa. The belief in these countries is that promoting small business enterprises can solve the youth unemployment problem.

But questions have been raised about the attitude of youth towards self-employment, especially in the informal sector. The dominant view in the literature is that young people in Africa have a negative attitude towards self-employment, especially in the informal sector (see Mandela, 1991; Okojie, 2003). It is generally argued that young Africans prefer formal employment to self-employment because of the 'white collar' mentality that they acquire from schools.

This paper argues that attitudes of young people towards self-employment in SSA vary from country to country, mainly depending on economic, social, political, cultural and historical factors. While some youth still exhibit a negative attitude towards self-employment, as Motts (2000) suggests in the case of South Africa, recent survey evidence from Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia (see Chigunta, 2005; Chigunta and Mkandawire, 2002) suggests that there is a positive change in attitudes towards self-

employment among youth. As shown in Box 2 below, this is also evident among ex-combatant youth (Bennett, 2002; Harsch, 2005).

Box: 2: The Aspirations of Ex-Combatant Youth

In Liberia, about 40 per cent of the demobilized fighters said they wanted to go back to school when asked about what they wanted to do. Most of the rest indicated a preference for vocational training, with auto mechanics being the most popular choice among men and tailoring among women. Similarly in Sierra Leone, all the female respondents in a survey aspired to skill-based self employment, with the highest proportion opting for tailoring. This implies that there is a larger latent demand for a kind of entrepreneurial behaviour or self-employment among young people in Africa than is generally assumed.

Sources: Bennett, 2002; Harsch, 2005.

Many unemployed African youth could, therefore, be seen as potential entrepreneurs. However, ‘potential’ should not be confused with ‘capability’. While a large proportion of young people have positive attitudes towards self-employment, they tend to experience more problems in establishing businesses than non-youth. This is due to, *inter alia*, the minimal skills, experience, capital, networks and status that are normally associated with youth.

It is tempting to account for the desire of many young Africans to set up businesses in the informal sector as arising from their perceived lack of choice or desperation. While this may be true for some young people, especially younger youth, research suggests that the expressed interest in self-employment between both young people and adults in contemporary Africa is an outcome of a complex combination of factors. These factors include a decline in the expectations regarding the availability of formal jobs, low wages in the formal sector, and, significantly, a positive change in the political and social environment of entrepreneurship as a consequence of economic liberalisation.

i) *The informal sector*

Evidence from studies in the 1990s in several SSA countries shows that the informal economy is by far the main source of employment in urban areas (Tripp, 1997, 2000). In countries such as Mali, Uganda and Zambia, over 70 per cent of urban workers were informally employed. The percentage of women in informal employment was particularly high in the countries sampled; in many cases, women dominated the lower echelons in the sector.²²

In the informal sector, the youth mainly find themselves relegated to the street-type activities such as hawking and shoe-shining from which they derive marginal livelihoods. However, the apparent predominance of young people in un-remunerative jobs in the informal sector does not necessarily mean that these young people cannot move, or are not moving, into more remunerative activities. Available evidence suggests that, unlike the majority of non-proprietor youth, proprietor youth can develop sustained economic activities and can, it seems, pursue independent livelihoods (Chigunta and Mkandawire,

²² As used here, the term ‘informal sector’ will be taken to refer, broadly, to those enterprises that operate outside formalised institutions. This sector encompasses a wide range of activities, from marginal to lucrative; many of its enterprises are small, many are unregistered; its entrepreneurs include both non-youth and youth of both sexes; their income is unmeasured and unrecorded. The term ‘informal sector’ will be used interchangeably with the term ‘micro enterprises’ or ‘informal businesses’ in this paper.

2002). The challenge is to empower young people to enable them set up viable and sustainable enterprises. In Rwanda, a recent survey shows that youth are innovative and can be successful entrepreneurs if they are exposed, inspired, supported, guided and mentored (Chigunta, 2005). Youthful women traders and entrepreneurs also are playing important roles in the development and reconstruction of African states that have been ravaged by warfare and instability.

It is also worth mentioning that information and communication technology (ICT) has become an important enterprise activity and source of employment for African youth in recent years (Okojie, 2003). The number of computer shops, internet service providers and trainers and phone shops is on the increase in urban centers in Africa. Most of these are run by youth. However, they are inaccessible to the unskilled or poorest youth. Furthermore, access to electricity remains a challenge for populations in both urban and rural areas.

Despite the importance of the informal sector, informal entrepreneurs, especially young people, have continued to operate under considerable constraints in an environment that does not encourage small, income-generating activities in many African countries. Among others, they face:

- Difficulties in accessing capital
- Difficulties in accessing working space
- Licensing and tax disincentives, and
- Harassment from state and council police.

Other problems include lack of skills and entrepreneurial training, poor social skills, lack of social networks, business contacts, and work experience needed to engage in enterprise activities in the informal sector. Lack of demand for informal products can also be a major problem.

All of these factors serve as disincentives for the urban self-employed, especially young people who are showing remarkable staying power through their own self-reliant efforts.

ii) *Small and medium enterprises*

The available evidence suggests that the involvement of youth in running small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is very low. In Ghana, a survey of small-scale enterprises revealed that younger youth aged 15 - 25 owned only 5.5 percent of enterprises, while those aged between 26 - 35 years owned 33.8 percent (Osei, *et al.*, 1993). In Borno state, Nigeria, a survey by Yusuf and Schindehutt (2000) put the median age of small scale entrepreneurs at 34.7 years (see also Echebiri, 2005). In South Africa, a study of ISOs by Morris and Pitt (1995) put their average age at 37.5 years. In Mali, Kessous and Lessard (1993) reported that the average age of an entrepreneur in their survey was 42.2 years. In Botswana, a survey established that most entrepreneurs were in the age groups 26-29 years and 60 - 64 years (GoB, 2003).

The high average age of small-scale entrepreneurs is probably related to the importance of age and its associated attributes in relation to access to resources (savings) needed to start a business and the time needed to gain urban experience and to establish business contacts. This illustrates the importance of the time dimension for learning about

enterprise (see also McGrath and King, 1995), thus contradicting the simplistic view that youth are ‘natural entrepreneurs’.

Public works programmes

In both rural and urban areas in post-conflict societies in Africa, temporary employment, for example, has been provided in the rehabilitation of infrastructure, de-mining or in emergency operations. In South Africa, the government implements various development projects targeting poor communities and groups. Most have an income-generating element and are implemented by local governments. Nationally-led interventions include the Integrated Nutrition and Food Security Programme (INFSP), the Working for Water (WfW) programme and the Working on Fire (WoF) programme. The government has also introduced what it calls the ‘Expanded Public Works Programme’ (EPWP) which aims to construct infrastructure while providing skills training and work experience. However, it is not presently known how many (ex-combatant) youth have benefited from these programmes.

Micro-credit

A review of literature shows that aspiring and existing youth entrepreneurs face difficulties in accessing capital (Chigunta and Mkandawire, 2002). The majority of young people rely on their own personal savings, and to varying degrees, parents, relatives and friends, as their major source of start – up capital.

There are very few documented cases of relatively successful micro-finance schemes for young people in Africa, let alone in post-conflict countries (Box 3). Here, we can only provide two from South Africa.

- Umsobomvu Youth Fund

In South Africa, the Government set up a skills development and employment creation fund called *Umsobomvu* Youth Fund (UYF) to address the growing youth unemployment problem in this country.²³ Funds are set aside for job creation and youth employment programmes via UYF. While youth access to finance still remains a challenge in South Africa, the UYF has established an entrepreneurship programme to make finance available to young people through partnerships with financial institutions and other providers of finance.

- Khula Enterprises

The South African Government has also set up a not-for-profit company called Khula Enterprises through which finance for SMMEs was channeled from the national budget, donors and other sources. Khula does not disburse funds itself, but has successfully done so through the existing network of banks and financial institutions such as the Small Business Development Corporation, Industrial Development Corporation, and the Development Bank of South Africa. However, youth access to finance still remains a major challenge.

²³ The word *umsobomvu* is Nguni for “rising dawn” and symbolises the rising of new opportunities for young South Africans. It embodies a new sense of hope, self exertion, self-reliance and enthusiasm.

Box 3: Poor Performance of Youth Credit Schemes in Africa

A review of literature suggests that most state-sponsored youth credit schemes in Africa have suffered from a number of weaknesses, especially the following: poor programme design; poor implementation (selection and targeting; poor loan disbursement; poor loan repayment rates; lack of monitoring skills; lack of strong financial control systems; lack of youth training in business and loan management; and *politicisation* (especially of the Youth Constituency Funds). On the other hand, there was little or no information to assess the performance of NGO-sponsored youth credit schemes.

Source: Chigunta and Mkandawire, 2002.

Social and civic engagement

We further suggest that there is need to involve ex-combatant youth in community projects that do not require special skills as part of the healing process. This would require implementation of a civic service programme in local communities, including schools. The civic programme would involve providing the youth with counseling, lessons on community relations and participation in community work. Among pupils, it would also involve practical service experiences outside of the classroom with linkage to grade level curricula. The aim would be to boost civic engagement among pupils by creating opportunities to link classroom learning with community service and enhance employability. Young women, some of whom are engaged in the political lives of their societies, should also be actively encouraged to participate in civic engagements.

Key Lessons Learnt from Past Economic Reintegration Initiatives in Africa

DDR programmes across Africa show that reintegration is a complex and long-term process. A key finding from the literature is the limited impact of the programmes and projects on the intended beneficiaries (see Lamb, 1997; Chaciua, 1999; Castelo-Branco, 1999; Mungoi, 1999; Cramer, 2002; Gear, 2003). The literature shows that few ex-combatants have benefited from the programmes and projects due to, *inter alia*, their limited coverage and unrealistic empowerment methodologies. It has been observed that the programmes do not take into account the needs of various types of combatants and the challenges facing them.

Despite the discourse around the programmes and projects emphasizing self-employment, entrepreneurship, community-based projects, vocational training, and so on, the delivery methodology tends to be weak as it is generally not based on the real needs of the combatants and their environment, nor factors in the dynamics of demand and supply in these societies. In Mozambique, ex-combatants were trained in a variety of skills as carpenters, brick-layers, shoe-makers, plumbers, auto-mechanics, electricians, and so on. However, the programme benefited very few former combatants (Mungoi, 1999). Significantly, most of the trained combatants remained unemployed for long periods of time as they could not use their newly acquired skills, resulting in frustration.

To quote Mungoi:

“They would have been trained as fishermen where there were no rivers or sea; as electricians where there was no electricity; funded to run small business in fixed market stall (Baracas) where there was no money in circulation due to the poverty of the community members” (pp. 37-38).

Indeed, as one demobilised Mozambican soldier put it, they were “reintegrated back into basic poverty.” (Harsch, 2005). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, although tens of thousands

of ex-fighters have already made the transition to civilian life and are working as carpenters, cocoa farmers, small-scale traders and electricians, unemployment remains very high, especially among young people (Harsch, 2005). Moreover, there is a glut of trained tailors and carpenters who do not have the tools to begin work (Bennett, 2002). In South Africa, some ex-combatants have transitioned into the new South Africa with relative ease and opportunity. But many others are finding it more difficult. One respondent who trained as a motor mechanic is worth quoting here:

“After completing my motor mechanics training I decided to open up my business. However, many other people in this business were already well established. I literally did not have any customers. I am now unemployed and it is very hard for me to live on the mercy of my relatives.”

The difficulties that ex-combatants face in reintegrating suggest that several preconditions are required for the actual use of skills. The first is that the available skills of former combatants can only be used productively if there is demand for these skills, and employment opportunities are provided in relevant occupations in the civilian sector. The cases above illustrate that this condition did not exist in Mozambique and South Africa. The second precondition is that former combatants must feel the motivation and incentive to work in the particular occupation. The third precondition is that, even where employment opportunities exist and former soldiers are motivated, various obstacles may prevent them from applying their skills. These obstacles include a poor understanding of the social context, a poor understanding of the local community, and failure to disaggregate the youth (see Annex IV). Others include failure to balance the needs of ex-combatants and non-combatants, poor state of the economy and failure to come up with appropriate employment policies.

The result of this is a high level of youth unemployment. However, Sierra Leone's experience provides some grounds for hope but, as Harsch (2005) observes, with a note of caution. In Sierra Leone, a large number of ex-combatants were able to acquire some form of livelihood, however limited. Some evidence suggests that those who went into farming may have done better than graduates of vocational training programmes.

Best Practices

From the foregoing discussion, we have identified the following as ‘best practices’ that can be critical to the success of the economic reintegration of ex-combatant youth:

- A good understanding of the prevailing local economic conditions
- Conducting a socio-economic profile of youth
- Carrying out a needs assessment of youth ex-combatants
- Basing job creation schemes on the local situation
- Providing skills training relevant to the local situation,
- Transforming the ‘militarist mentality’ of ex-combatant youth
- Carefully designed credit schemes
- Focusing on broader community empowerment, and
- Undertaking wider efforts aimed at economic recovery and political reconciliation.

Role of Institutions

In the literature, there has been little discussion regarding types of institutions and interventions that are suitable to facilitate the creation of employment opportunities for ex-combatant youth. Moreover, views differ on whether young people need specialized, youth-oriented, business support services or whether they should use the same general agencies and programmes as anybody else in society (see White and Kenyon, 2000).²⁴

The challenge for African governments, NGOs and international bodies that seek to improve youth livelihoods is to tap into the dynamism of young people and build on their strong spirit of wishing to go into self-employment. At the moment, there is no serious attempt on the part of government and other institutions to support enterprise development programmes for youth, especially those working in the informal sector.

A review of literature shows that there are some relatively successful initiatives and home-grown solutions conceived and developed by Africans, including youth, to try and address the problems facing young people. The existing programmes or initiatives can be broadly divided into the following

- Training programmes
- Employment and livelihood programmes
- Micro-finance schemes
- Health and HIV/AIDS programmes
- Information and communication technology, and
- Environment and conservation.

Despite some successes, the evidence also points to the failure of many youth projects across Africa. Survey evidence from Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia (see Chigunta and Mkandawire, 2002; Chigunta, 2005) suggests that, although there presently are some institutions, including government and NGOs, that seek to address a range of youth livelihoods issues, they are very few and far apart. While some of these institutions have innovative youth livelihoods interventions, their intake and coverage is very limited. There are also concerns about lack of coordination and institutional networking, which could constitute possible immediate tasks under any proposal to address the problem of youth poverty. Significantly, the existing institutions tend to work in isolation from each other, resulting in little or no visible impact on youth, as in Rwanda and other countries.

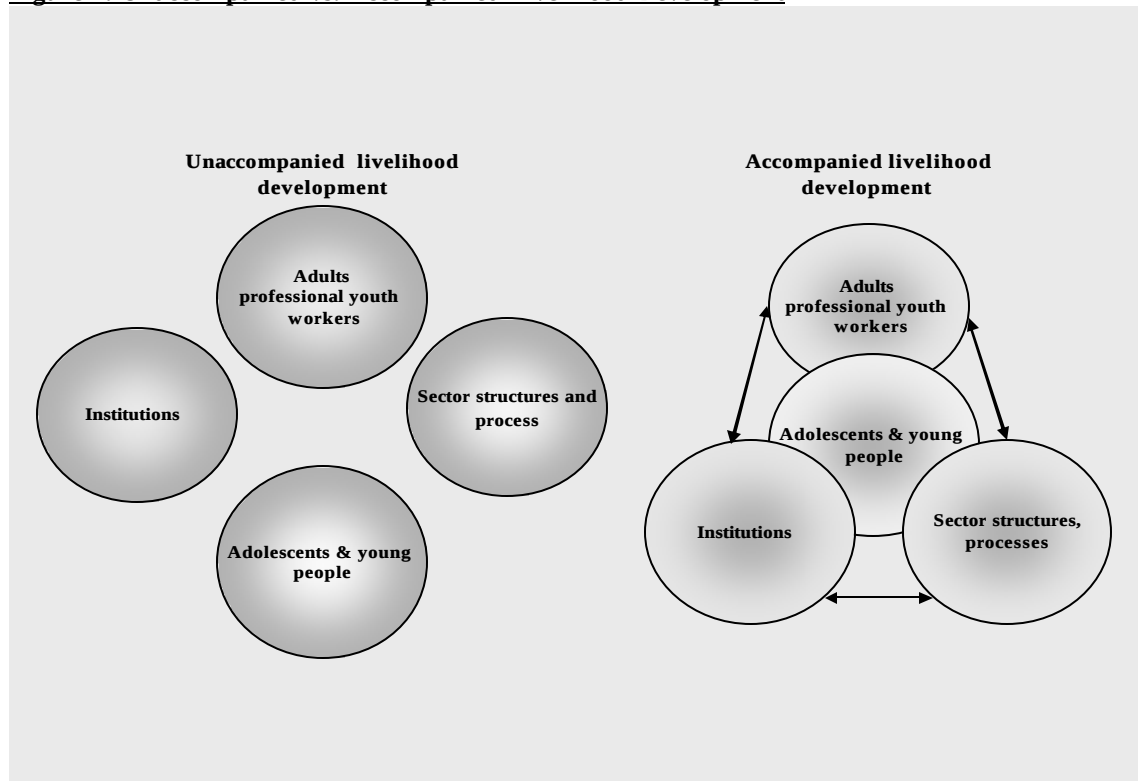
This situation closely resembles what we may call an ‘unaccompanied livelihood development framework’ for youth in Africa. Figure 1 below contrasts an unaccompanied livelihood development framework where young people are engaged in work in isolation from adults and institutions and the sector structures with the accompanied livelihood development framework which shows a central circle (youth) with three other partially

²⁴ The latter view holds that the skills available in general support agencies are appropriate for working with young clients and that specific youth agencies risk creating a ‘youth ghetto’ which is artificial and is given poor preparation for the ‘real world’. It is also argued that such agencies prevent young people from the opportunity of learning from older people. However, promoters of specialized youth business support programmes such as Business in the Community (UK) (quoted by White and Kenyon, 2000), argue that young people as a group require more time and attention than older people and this may exceed what general development agencies wish to provide one client. It is argued that older clients are unlikely to need some of the help young people require. Furthermore, to get the most from counselling, the client and counsellor have to empathise whatever their ages. This requires staff trained and experienced in dealing with young men and women.

overlapping circles representing (adults, institutions, government structures) dynamically interacting with, supporting and learning from young people.

The existence of this situation in most African countries calls for a closer working collaboration among various institutions working in the area of youth poverty reduction or livelihood promotion in African countries. Our view is that the foundation of any genuine form of collaboration will need to be found in a new kind of youth-adult partnership.

Figure 1: Unaccompanied vs. Accompanied Livelihood Development



Source: Chigunta, *et al.*, 2005.

The resulting approach might be best articulated within an accompanied livelihood development framework that looks at the interlocking roles of young people and adults in supporting the generation and growth of assets and capabilities among youth.

This situation suggests that, rather than young people being expected to develop themselves, by themselves, for themselves – there is need for a holistic approach to the promotion of youth livelihoods. This more holistic model calls for a multi-stakeholder investment of time, resources and creative programming.

In our view, a lot more needs to be done to strengthen the institutional capacity for youth employment creation in post-conflict societies. This is a big challenge which will require the cooperation of all key stakeholders. There are several areas in which various institutions could strategically invest or develop partnerships with state institutions, the private sector and CSOs to create opportunities for the productive employment of the youth ex-combatants in Africa.

The starting point is to ensure that emerging policy initiatives become effective tools for developing strategic partnerships involving governments, multilateral agencies, the private sector and civil society which can facilitate the creation of productive economic opportunities for young people by mainstreaming them. Below we briefly examine the potential role of some key multilateral players:

The African Union

As a continental body, the Africa Union (AU) can play an important role in promoting the welfare of African youth. Commendably, the AU has adopted instruments and protocols on children and young people to which most African countries have acceded. The AU should use these instruments and protocols as a platform to advocate for the promotion of independent, sustainable youth livelihoods, especially for ex-combatant youth in post-conflict situations. The AU should, through the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), encourage African governments to adhere to good governance which involves satisfying the basic needs of people, including youth. It should also encourage them to ratify, domesticate and operationalise existing international standards and codes on young people.

NEPAD

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has a critical role to play in the promotion of sustainable youth livelihoods, especially in post-conflict situations. NEPAD, as an AU framework, should, concurrently with regional economic communities (RECs) such as SADC, COMESA and ECOWAS, design regional programmes for the promotion of youth livelihoods. Member countries can adopt and adapt these plans and programmes to suit their own environments. This should be done as part of the broader development programme. NEPAD has several programme clusters, including infrastructure, political governance and economic development, which can greatly assist in the reconstruction of war-torn countries. Working through the RECs, NEPAD can assist African governments to access resources that can particularly help in the reconstruction of war-torn countries.

The UN system

The UN has a number of specialised agencies which can help African countries, especially those emerging from war, to design appropriate policies and programmes for the reintegration of (ex-combatant) youth. Through the provision of technical and financial support, the UN agencies can assist both in the reconstruction of the post-conflict countries in the rehabilitation of their institutions and in providing direct assistance to organisations working with ex-combatant youth. Relevant UN departments do need to develop an integrated approach that draws together the skills capacities and resources of these departments, as well as adopts joint policies in addressing these challenges.

The collaboration among various institutions can promote the multi-stakeholder investment of time, resources and creative programming referred to above. As noted above, strategic partnerships forged between governments, the private sector and civil society are critical to successful post-conflict reconstruction in order to prevent recourse to violent conflict, crime and other vices. Critical also is identifying the nature of these partnerships.

IV. Summary and Recommendations

African youth, especially ex-combatants, represent significant challenges as well as opportunities for social and economic development on the continent. Development scholars and practitioners are now being forced to consider the social and economic implications of Africa's youthfulness. While Africa's youth often is portrayed in negative terms – violent, rebellious, unhealthy and disrespectful of custom – they also represent the future of the continent, primarily because they are the potential engines of growth, stability and development in Africa. The AIDS pandemic, wars, and poverty have left large segments of the continent's youth to fend for themselves, and with increasingly important but understated roles in many spheres of life. The time is especially opportune for governments and other stakeholders to reflect on the implications of Africa's youthfulness for the development of the continent. For, as Mayor and Binde (2001) observe, there is no hope of building peaceful, democratic societies as long as unemployment, violence and the illegal sources of livelihoods are the only things that young African have to look forward to.

Therefore, the development challenges of the continent increasingly must engage youth in meaningful programmes and policies. In view of the absence of employment opportunities for young people in the formal sector, there is need to design effective and viable job creation schemes for the youth in both rural and urban areas. Efforts should, therefore, be made to do the following:

I. Development of sustainable youth reintegration programmes

1. Facilitate the development of sustainable reintegration programmes which take account of local cultural and social understandings and resources, and ensure that such programmes involve the participation of local communities in the formulation, implementation and evaluation.
 - Ensure that ex-combatants and non-combatants do not view themselves as being in competition with each other, through facilitating programmes where these two groups are encouraged to work together and form bonds.
2. Recognize that reintegration is a complex process and should be implemented and funded on a long term and sustainable basis. Links must be made between short term and long term sustainable reintegration
 - Provide infrastructure support for reintegration, such as basic social services, (schools, health clinics, etc.)

II. Creation of job/work opportunities and income generating activities for youth

1. Adopt integrated learning strategies for various categories of young people.
 - Integrate 'non-traditional' programming into the 'mainstream' education system, inclusive of training focused on: ICT, governance, leadership, goal setting, peace building, and other 'life' skills (such as peace education and HIV/AIDS awareness).

- Integrate on-the-job-training into vocational education.
- Link education and skills training to the realities of the job market in order to avoid mismatch between skills training and labour demand.
- Devise programming that includes a long-term focus and support mechanisms. This is based on the understanding that reintegration is a complex long-term that requires a long-term commitment among all stakeholders.

2. Identify the needs of various groups of young people

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, including: an examination of existing structures, training facilities and educational institutions; understanding of the labour market, with a focus on matching skills training to jobs available; and a determination of the needs and wants of both the community and the youth (beneficiaries).
- Conduct monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of reintegration programmes. M&E play an important role to ensure that youth development programmes are generating the desired outcomes. M&E can help gather information necessary to meet accountability requirements, including those specific to broader government requirements and those specified by donors. Reintegration programmes should, therefore, develop appropriate M&E systems.

3. Provide relevant job opportunities for the multifarious categories of young people in society

- Link youth policy measures directly to national planning frameworks (i.e. the inclusion of youth issues within PRSP).
- Shift macro-economic policy to encourage growth with equitable distribution.
- Provide an enabling environment conducive to public-private dialogue and partnership.
- Establish a fund and/or effective funding mechanisms focused on providing resources (both financial and technical) for youth.
- Create opportunities to allow youth to have greater access to jobs, inclusive of internships, mentorship programs and other alternative job-placement strategies. *Include other measures as well, i.e. - youth trade fairs, enterprise groups, etc.*

4. Promote small and medium enterprise (SME) development

- Develop and operationalize a comprehensive SME policy, aimed at establishing a conducive economic environment for long-term SME success and growth.
- Provide support to youth enterprise development, including: training and business education, increased access to funding, increased market access, advisory and mentorship services, etc.
- Develop an effective export strategy combined with a restrictive import policy.
- Develop support mechanisms to give incentives and encourage growth within the informal sector.

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Annex I: Global Obstacles to Agribusiness

- *Demographic changes*, including urbanisation, population growth in non-farming segments and household income growth will all yield new opportunities (especially related to high value food products and food service industry development), but will also place greater demands on the management of urban food distribution systems, increase the level and types of food safety risks, etc
- *Increasing consumer sovereignty* within developed countries and developing countries. For those with a good understanding of market demand and with ample marketing skills and alliances, there is wide scope for profiting from changing consumer preferences and fashions. But satisfying these consumer ‘wants’ will require changes in production and supply arrangements and the associated trading system
- *Emerging technologies*, especially in information technology, biological technology, food safety, and measurement technologies (such as colour and price scanning). Those able to adopt and manage these technologies are potentially able to improve product quality, achieve coordination and other cost effectiveness and reduce a variety of business and food safety risks. These are, however, capital intensive
- *Multilateral trade liberalisation*, which is lowering tariffs and quantitative barriers to trade, even though agriculture remains one of the most protected tradable sectors in the world. Trade liberalisation is a double-edged sword for African countries, opening up new market opportunities at the same as it exposes domestic farmers and firms to competition from abroad. Competition is now a serious challenge in agro-business
- *Growing concentration in the food and agricultural technology industries*, partly due to continued mergers and acquisition activity by leading companies. This situation worsens the asymmetry of market power in the agro-food system, potentially raising barriers to small players like youth who need to meet the requirements of the few and larger ‘gate keepers’ on the path to retail outlets
- *The internationalisation and privatisation of standards* that accompany the forces of globalisation. Grades and (product and process) standards are taking on a greater meaning with the reduction in tariff and similar trade barriers and in the light of consumer’s (and retail gate keepers) demands for quality, safety, authenticity, and sustainability. This phenomenon could represent major barriers to entry or continued market access in the form of compliant requirements on the part of entrepreneurs in developing countries, and
- *Subsidies* granted by developed countries to the agricultural and agri-business sectors create severe market distortions, resulting in artificially depressed world prices and loss of market opportunity for African producers.

Annex II: Advantages of RETs

- *It is clean and pollutes less*

Use of RETs has a less damaging effect on the environment unlike fossil fuels like oil, coal and natural gas. These fuels release dangerous gases called Green House Gases (GHGs).

- *There is almost no carbon dioxide emission*

Unlike fossil fuels, renewable energy releases little or no carbon dioxide.

- *RETs make a country less dependent on oil*

Many developing countries spend a large proportion of their income on importing oil. Developing renewable energy technologies can save this money and release it for other uses.

- *Countries require less foreign currency*

By becoming less dependent on oil imports, many poor countries will be able to save valuable foreign currency.

- *RETs are cheap*

Unlike conventional energy sources, renewable energy is cheaper and the price has been falling in recent years due to economies of scale and new technologies.

- *Easy to install, maintain and repair*

Compared to conventional energy sources, renewable energies are easier to install, maintain and repair.

- *Easy to transport*

Unlike conventional energy sources, renewable energy is easier to transport and can be installed in areas which the national electricity grid cannot reach.

- *Community ownership*

Unlike the fossil or big hydro power plants, which belong to big companies, government. Renewable energy can be set up in small units and is therefore suitable for community management and ownership.

Annex III: Barriers to Youth Entry into Renewable Energy

These barriers include:

- *Lack of information*

Rural communities, including youth, frequently have limited access to existing knowledge bases that promote the use of renewable energy through economically and financially sustainable means. Young people lack knowledge of market potential for RETs and the potential of providing renewable energy services to customers, successful replicable projects, potential financial partners, and means of establishing renewable energy systems.

- *Lack of technical and entrepreneurial skills*

Even if they may have the above-mentioned knowledge, youth generally lack the skills to produce and promote renewable energy. This includes financial management of the business, preparing the business plan to market renewable energy, analysing and dissemination of information, and technical know-how to maintain and service the equipment. The youth need training in technical and entrepreneurship skills.

- *The high cost of equipment*

In the short-term, the cost of acquiring renewable energy equipment tends to be high. This prevents youth from becoming renewable energy entrepreneurs.

- *Lack of capital*

Related to the prohibitive cost of equipment is lack of access to capital, especially institutional capital, among youth. The perception of youth as 'high risky borrowers', coupled with lack of collateral, means that young people find it very difficult to borrow money from banks, let alone micro-finance institutions. In most countries, there are hardly any credit schemes that specifically target youth.

- *Inaccessibility of Technology*

Rural communities often do not have access to renewable energy technologies and thus may not understand these technologies or the technical assistance required to support its promotion and adoption.

- *Other Barriers*

Other barriers to youth entrepreneurship in renewable energy relate to the following:

- Reliability of the RETs
- Social and cultural issues
- Equipment production
- Serviceability in terms of equipment
- Lack of a supportive policy environment, and
- Lack of a supportive institutional environment.

Annex IV: Obstacles to the Smooth Reintegration of Youth

- The social context

Critical to the success of any initiatives aimed at promoting the economic reintegration of youth (ex-combatants) is the need to consider the context within which civil strife and the disintegration of society is occurring in Africa. Thus, Machel's call to alleviate poverty and social injustice may be more important as it is these factors which underpin many conflicts and dealing with them could prevent conflicts occurring. In Sierra Leone, corruption and the resultant poverty of many of the people was certainly important in motivating the rebels. In Rwanda, Burundi and Congo DRC, equity remains a serious problem even though the authorities are making attempts to address the problem. While the gender gap seems to closing up, there is a sharp difference between urban and rural youth in terms of availability and quality of education and other services. This often times is blamed for low enrolments and retention in primary and secondary schools in rural areas. When it comes to employment, urban youth are better off, as they have access to information and facilities and are exposed to more diverse employment options than rural youth. The increasing rural-urban migration should trigger policy actions to address this inequity.

- The local community

In DDR processes, much work seeks to reconstruct communities. It is argued that communities should be actively involved in the social reintegration of former combatants into society (Lundin, 1996; Chachiua, 1999). According to Mashike (2000), this helps the community to accept former soldiers as community members, and helps former fighters to feel that they belong. The approach should be based on community development projects in which former soldiers participate. But, as Sommers (2006) observes, the current focus on community reconstruction does not address the

possibility that what community leaders did before the war helped cause it. Recent research in Burundi reveals that international agencies have unintentionally helped to rebuild structures of inequality that were a central cause of civil war (Sommers, 2005).²⁵ In post-war Liberia, Richards, *et al.*, 1995 warn that communities would sink their differences temporarily in order to qualify for a donor grant, suggesting that their reintegration efforts may empower certain groups over others and provide, at best, temporal results. They add that many young people are no longer able, or willing to, integrate within a traditional social system based on family land and social deference.

- Disaggregating ex-combatants

As previously noted, it is important to differentiate the various sub-groups found within the youth category in order to capture their varying different needs, livelihood challenges and aspirations of various youth sub-groups.²⁶ The apparent inherent duality and contradictions in the youth cohort implies that services designed to reintegrate various categories of ex-combatants may not be appropriate for the needs of others. This suggests the need to both conduct a socio-economic profile of ex-combatant youth and a needs assessment to find out what their needs area. Thus, to be responsive to the needs, assistance programmes could best be designed and amended in a continuing dialogue with former combatants, their families and communities. Failure to do this leads to the failure of reintegration programmes. Health care and special assistance to the disabled ex-combatants are also important components of effective reintegration programmes.

- Balancing the needs of ex-combatants with those of non-combatant youth

In most efforts to support reintegration, policy makers face a dilemma on whether or not to treat the former fighters as a special target group. Our view is that support programmes have to strike a balance between dealing with the specific needs of this group and not creating discontent among the rest of their often poor communities, which would actually jeopardise true reintegration. Support for the reintegration of returnees and displaced people faces similar dilemmas. From a short-term, conflict resolution point of view, the inclination may be to please former combatants to forestall a return to arms. While the needs of former soldiers have to be taken seriously, care should always be taken not to place undue emphasis on their role in the struggle for liberation.²⁷ War affects everyone regardless of whether they are ex-combatants or not. The overall development of communities may be undermined by the assertion that one group (the former combatants) is more important than any other in society. The effect of this could be that former soldiers believe that they still have the right to special resources years after conflict has ended, whilst civilians feel neglected. This would result in their social rejection, especially among the

²⁵ According to Sommers (2006), their concentration of support in the ‘favoured’ zones of *communes* (such as reconstructing destroyed permanent structures) while largely overlooking ‘neglected’ zones (where few such structures or opportunities for advancement existed) appears to have greatly exacerbated geographic, ethnic and class disparities and is a potentially destabilising factor that could help fuel a return to violent conflict.

²⁶ For instance, South Africa has a vast and heterogeneous ex-combatant population, emanating from multiple armed formations as well as from markedly different situations within these formations. Their current situations are likely to be as varied as their backgrounds. Some, we know, have transitioned into the new South Africa

²⁷ Mashike (2000) has observed that in Zimbabwe, one of the complex reasons for the land invasions in Zimbabwe is the emphasis placed on war veterans by the Mugabe government over the years. This has caused war veterans to see themselves as a special group requiring special attention. The reality of the situation, however, is that despite cash payments, financial resources become exhausted in time and former soldiers join the unemployed masses. Zimbabwean war veterans have plunged into the depths of poverty experienced by the majority of the Zimbabwean people. Like the majority of the population, they need some help.

unemployed majority. Special treatment of this group may also affect the morale of soldiers remaining in the army.²⁸ From a long term perspective, a consensus appears to be developing that special efforts for former combatants are necessary during demobilisation and resettlement, but that support in the reintegration phase should be increasingly community-based and part of general post-conflict rehabilitation efforts.

- The state of the economy

Efforts must be made to ensure that the economic conditions in the country are conducive to the successful economic reintegration of former soldiers in society. In several countries, the reintegration of former combatants has taken place in a context of an ailing economy and a poor macro-economic environment. In South Africa, the ANC's adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy makes it impossible to invest in public sector job creation (Mashike, 2000). Instead, the trend is towards privatisation, which is always characterised by job losses and the deterioration of working conditions. A similar situation exists in other countries. This means that the employment prospects of former combatants are very bleak when considering that they have to compete with skilled civilians. The provision of skills through institutions like the Service Corps in an economy that does not create full employment is not helpful. In some cases, poverty is so rife that the unemployed cannot even consume goods from the informal sector.

- Employment policy

It has been observed that few African countries have an explicit employment policy context within which to situate their youth (Mhone, *et al.*, 1999). The structural adjustment and stabilisation policy packages currently in place all over Africa have often been considered sufficient as a policy context. Employment generation in this context is seen as a derivative of the overall economic resuscitation that is expected to take place as economies are restructured. According to Mhone, *et al.*, this expectation is based on the assumption that once the government puts in place the necessary conditions, the private sector may create jobs. The evidence shows that this is not always the case and that where jobs are created, the conditions are often appalling (Mashike, 2000). According to Mashike, the trend under the neo-liberal hegemony is to divide workers into the 'core', a small number of permanent workers classified as skilled, and 'periphery', a large pool of workers who work on a part-time basis under severe conditions. Mashike notes that in South Africa former soldiers are mostly seen as unskilled except in the skill of violence, and will automatically be categorised as unskilled. This means competing for scarce job opportunities (which are not guaranteed) with the majority of the population.²⁹

²⁸ Protests and even mutinies in the new Mozambican army (FADM) were partially caused by high payments to the demobilised (Kingma, 1996).

²⁹ In cases where former soldiers received some vocational training, other obstacles such as cultural attitudes and negative feedback may exclude them from job opportunities. This is a challenge in a country like South Africa where former soldiers were labeled terrorists during the armed struggle. Since the economy is still mostly in the hands of whites (some who do not want to accept change), it is highly likely that former soldiers will be excluded from job opportunities.