

# **Youth in Post-Conflict Africa: Community-Based Rehabilitation, Rebuilding and Reconstruction of Society**

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## **I. CHALLENGES FACING YOUTH IN POST CONFLICT COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA**

### *What is Community-Based Rehabilitation?*

Where there is such a large number of young men and women returning from conflict, they will, of necessity, have to be part of the social system and social structure; and they will have to be accepted into the society. This means that the system should provide basic necessities such as health, education, housing, recreation, etc. Countries that are trying to settle down after a civil strife, or conflict of any kind in Africa, have experienced a tremendous amount of financial, social political and cultural strain. It is possible that the political strain supersedes the other challenges because, at the early stages after conflict, the rehabilitation process will have to be facilitated by the emerging or “victorious” political entity. This political entity shall recognize and safeguard the human rights and interests of returning youth who are physically and/or mentally injured. For a successful post-conflict rehabilitation to be launched, the “new” political entity empowers the post-conflict returning youth to participate in the designing and formulation of strategies and policies they are themselves expected to abide by.

Initially, rehabilitation was exclusively executed in institutions, especially medical and mental institutions. The cost has always been high, particularly the financial cost. These costs are met by international and bilateral assistance. In the case of post-conflict Sierra Leone and Liberia, Britain, Nigeria and the United States respectfully helped. Donors will eventually pull out. Development assistance is almost always linked with inflation, high cost of equipment and personnel. This results in reduction in the assistance given, and so inadequate attention is paid to educating the youth, there is little or no money for health services and the emerging political entity cannot afford housing, recreation and other human development tools. In their “relief to development continuum” Jasper et al (1997) have certainly added another variable to the definition of Community-Based Rehabilitation—CBR—which was provided initially in an unpublished WHO Report “Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation” in 1976 and repeated in 1981. The definition reads as follows:

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“community-based rehabilitation involves measures taken at the community level to use and build on the resources of the community, including the impaired, disabled and handicapped persons themselves, their families and their community as a whole.”

Because so much has changed since 1976 in post-conflict situations of youth in the world in general and in Africa in particular, CBR can be defined as an all inclusive intervention strategy directed and programmed to avail material and physical resources, basic human dignity and necessity not only to returning ex-youth combatants in which the stakeholders include the youth, but to the community at large and particularly to those ex-youth combatants with physical and mental scars who would be cared for both in institutions and in their communities. In 1994, the ILO, UNESCO and WHO gave a combined definition of CBR as follows:

“a strategy within community development for the rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities and social integration of all people with disabilities. It is implemented through the combined efforts of disabled people themselves, their families and communities and the appropriate health, education, vocational and social services” (WHO, 1994).

### *Success and Challenges of CBR*

Conflict in Africa has dislocated social and physical structures. There have been incidences of loss, uncertainty and even psychological trauma has been caused, social reconstruction would and has incorporated a totally destroyed social sector and as rehabilitation gets underway it facilitates a durable process of social integration, the cornerstone of which is youth—including those who were actors in conflict. Since civil strife resulted in destruction of the social order, such as institutions that provided health, education, housing, recreation, etc., there have been gerrymandering of allocation of resources of the social sector. CBR, difficult though it has been in Sierra Leone, Algeria, Rwanda, etc., has helped to facilitate peace, at least up to the moment. At the community level, voluntary associations in which post-conflict youth have become members have provided assistance and organized “training and discussion groups” on health related issues (ILO, 1994).

As post-conflict youth return to their communities, they bring with them new health problems, many of which were previously unknown such as psycho-social trauma, war related injuries, problems of nutrition and even loss of livelihoods. Even if the institutions were not looted during the conflict, they now evidently lack the capacity to shoulder the new burdens they have to cope with. In post apartheid South Africa, for example, higher incidences of child abuse were reported than during the apartheid era (Nordstrom, 1997). In an attempt to curb the higher child abuse rate, PAHA (People Against Human Abuse) was established. This organization was truly community-based; PAHA organized dialogue with teachers, health clinic personnel and the police, all of whom assisted with a large number of the victims.

Civil conflicts have resulted in psycho-social suffering, gang rape, torture, murder, etc. These have, unfortunately, resulted in loss of self-esteem, self confidence, loss of control, alcoholism, drug addiction, suicide and trauma of various kinds. In post-conflict Mozambique, youth overcame the stress by engaging in constructive work collectively which were thought to be very therapeutic (Gibbs, 1997). Gibbs wrote:

“the actual physical work of reconstruction following return, such as the building of homes and the planting of fields, was considered by local people to be particularly crucial to the post-war healing of individuals and communities” (1997:228).

### *Challenges Ahead for CBR Programs*

With the success of CBR, and with an increasing number of civil conflicts and an equally increasing number of youth casualties, the challenges have mounted. For example, how can the objectives of CBR programs be evaluated? It is indeed necessary to measure the performance of CBR based on its set of objectives. So far there has been no known reliable methodology that effectively measures their performance. Adequate evaluation of CBR programs can help determine how, the extent to which, and what kinds of improvements should be made. The roles of the various stakeholders are fragmented and have so far not been streamlined and regularized. There is a huge disparity in incentives made available to various personnel, in the same way that no known regularity exists in CBR remuneration packages. The quality of training in many instances can still be improved. There are inconsistencies in the support and supervision of CBR staff. Perhaps one of the most profound challenges of CBR programs to post-conflict youth in Africa is the apparent lack of a culture of accountability, transparency, responsibility and civil duty of those who are charged to implement such programs.

### *Implementing CBR Successfully*

There is an alarming fact; it is that there are post-conflict youth in particular, and non-post-conflict youth in general, in our societies and we must deal with this tragic African situation. An important question is: who should deal with this alarming and tragic situation and how? The first part of this question is easy. All of us must deal with it—the family, the government, media, academia, NGOs, private and public sectors, etc.

In all of these areas, leadership and political will, commitment, devotion and guidance should be instilled. So should a culture of discipline, accountability, responsibility and transparency. They should be instilled in the policy makers, politicians and authorities who are involved in national development plans. Government leaders and policy makers of all categories, including traditional authorities, are faced with and aware of the fact that “child soldiers” and youth participate in civil conflict, and at the end of the conflict they have to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into societies with the objective of facilitating their participation in the development process.

For this they need leadership. In order to rally a nation and captivate the attention of the youth returning from combat, authorities must have the foresight to cultivate a sense of vision and guide, inspire and direct their youth—particularly post-conflict youth—to achieve a set of objectives for the greater good and influence them by moral and ethical standards. If this is lacking, post-conflict youth will not be able to discern a difference between these national leaders and those in the conflict they have left behind. Post-conflict youth are not inspired and can see no mission in life, and are more likely to lose faith in the system that has failed them once before. The leaders, in order to reach out to post-conflict youth, must demonstrate a political determination that involves risk taking, even losing their positions. To reach out to post-conflict youth is risk taking. The idea of youth in the media was first introduced by the United Nations in 1965 when the Organization endorsed the “Declaration on the Promotion Among Youth of the Ideal of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between People.” Since then, post-conflict youth have been receiving global recognition and understanding as is reflected in the World Youth Report 2005 that was presented at the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly. At the regional level, the AU has emphasized the unmistakable role the NEPAD must play in incorporating youth into the regional development.

This and other documents, including the 1985 report when the UN recognized the International Youth Year, the 2000 report in which the Secretary General promoted the Youth Employment Network (YEN), the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programs, and the World Youth Report, 2003 demonstrated the commitment of the global community, but at the national and local levels policy makers and other authorities must show by example, by promise and by pledge to bring to the youth in general (and to post-conflict youth in particular) those services they lacked before they were abducted or recruited to join conflict. An unfading devotion to implement policies that create jobs, training, education and health services goes a long way to recapture the attention of post-conflict youth in such a way that they can trust and believe people in power. The trust of post-conflict youth, in turn, is earned. National authorities are the trustees of the future reconstruction and development of Africa. Their devotion must be unwavering and this is demonstrated by concrete examples of policies that have legal backing as well as by real examples of job creation and entrepreneurial exercises in the society.

Legal consequences, while important, require other mechanisms that are of even more significance. The capacity for African authorities to demonstrate discipline, transparency and accountability is in short supply. Some administrations show little sense of responsibility to regular or post-conflict youth or to the countries. As a result, many administrations run governments that do not have the support of their youth.

If a culture of responsibility, accountability and transparency is cultivated, post-conflict youth can for example (as a job creation exercise) be made to clear the main streets of trash and debris in some African capital cities for monetary compensation. But this is not a task that can be accomplished single handedly by African governments. The culture of responsibility, accountability and transparency is shared by all segments of society, both public and private, the media, academia and the family and kinship system, NGOs, etc. As ex-combatants observe that interest over their affairs is inclusive, they

soon come to accept that being engaged in any civil strife will not be tolerated and has no place in their society for they shall not be compensated.

With this degree of inclusiveness and comprehensive approach a new dawn begins; one in which there is a re-examination of attitude to reconstruction and development of post-conflict youth. The involvement of the entire society breeds a popular attitudinal change in which the 15 to 24 year olds, those who have been involved in conflict and those who have not, consider it their civic responsibility to begin to lay the foundation for durable peace, reconstruction and sustainable development. Because of their lack of power and authority at this stage to flex their numerical superiority, this paper invites this august body to explore and debate youth (post-conflict and otherwise, youth victims and perpetrators) involvement in their societies, communities and their country's development and reconstruction from the following angles: security, opportunity, integration, equality and empowerment.

### *The Present State of CBR in Post-Conflict Africa: Successes and Failures*

The present situation of CBR in post-conflict Africa is a mixed picture. The military keeps the peace in order to allow CBR activities to take place. In 2006, the Sierra Leone police force, its army and airport services were manned by British military. In 1996 Outram (September 1997, pp. 189-200) in his "Cruel Wars and Safe Havens" analyzed the role of the army in Liberia before a democratically elected government in 2006. In Angola, 10% of the population injured and/or killed was child soldiers and women amputees who had to receive CBR in hospitals and their communities. In Mozambique, 800,000 amputees from land mines were child soldiers and women and were cared for in institutions and their communities. In Mozambique, Algeria, Uganda and Liberia, teachers conducted schools underneath trees, refugee camps, welfare camps and in their homes (Allen, 1996). In Algeria (Power-Stevens, 1996) and Liberia (Taylor, 1995) education was conducted literally at the grassroots level. It was(is) very hard work with no books, no blackboards, no chalk. During the civil conflict, health facilities were destroyed, looted, and health care personnel were displaced either voluntarily or forcibly. The response to the war weary was inadequate. The capacity to rehabilitate the youthful ex-combatants in their local communities was severely diminished (Tommasoli, 1995). Ethiopia and Eritria have still not recovered, and Ethiopia has worked hard to improve its health care system by adopting a national administrative decentralization. Somalia, on the other hand, demonstrated remarkable know-how by establishing an extensive social network at the community level which was a key factor in CBR (Jama, 1996). These networks have rehabilitated schools and health clinics and in some instances housing and recreational services. In Sierra Leone, the very comprehensive privatization of the health services has created a situation in which many local communities and individuals run their private health clinics that serve the ex-combatants more effectively than the public sector. Low cost housing schemes have developed jointly by the private and public sectors that have organized special training and entrepreneurial services for the ex-combatants.

## **II. CURRENT POLICY ENVIRONMENT: OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

## *CBR Policies*

Perhaps the more substantive policies of CBR are less national and more global; this is probably because community-based projects are embedded in local power politics while national based projects are associated with national development plans that are financed and supported by foreign governments and multilateral organizations. In a civil strife, bush clinics are constructed to provide healthcare, for example, in areas that are under the control of a rebel or one faction in conflict. That faction has the support of the local people. In Mozambique, UNESCO established a program which integrated ex-combatants on the one hand, and youth who did not participate in conflict on the other. This was a dilemma for UNESCO. The UNHCR's Quick Impact Project "...was integrative across the board, it integrated youth across boundaries" (Nordstrom et al., 1997). Gibbs' 1997 'Post War Social Reconstruction in Mozambique: Reframing Children's Experiences of Trauma and Healing' in Kumar (ed.) *Rebuilding Societies After Civil War*; Ilo's *Capacity Building for Social Development: Programme of Action for Transition in Occupied Palestine*; Jama's *Finding a Place for Women in Today's Society* (1996) are just a few of the successful policies on CBR. These policies have proved to be successful and accepted because they are inter-ethnic, inter-regional and more inclusive and directed towards social integration. They also aim to strengthen the capacity of institutions and individuals including the disabled. More recent policies of CBR include development of rehabilitation technology such as prosthetics and orthotic supply, demobilization and integration support programs, income generation and community activities. These more recent policies, however, are expensive and with the growing cost of rehabilitation, donor fatigue and low-level technology in the region, more appropriate "community-based technology" will have to be improvised.

## *Universal Significance of Community-Based Rehabilitation*

There is a definite reason why community-based rehabilitation has become a universal intervention strategy. In a simplified explanation, we say it is to adequately situate post-conflict youth, but the next logical question that follows is why did these youth engage in conflict? The argument has been made in this paper that the main cause is poverty. Since poverty is common in Africa, since there are active steps made to combat poverty, and since one of these steps is community-based rehabilitation, CBR has become a popular and universal mechanism to combat poverty.

Earlier in this paper, mention was made of the cause of 15-24 year olds (and even younger youth) being in conflict. The main cause is poverty, and lack of security is a universal scourge in Africa. It leads to armed conflict. There is a universalistic dimension, however negative, associated with it. All international development organizations analyze the state of poverty, underdevelopment and insecurity in the region. One of the mission statements of OSAA (Office of the Special Advisor on Africa) is to "enhance international support for Africa's development and security through its advocacy and analytical work." In a panel on "Enabling Environment and Resource Mobilization" for the least developed countries emerging from conflict, OSAA further stressed the importance of resource mobilization and especially assistance for

post-conflict reconstruction and development (emphasis added). In NEPAD's (New Partnership for Africa's Development) original document, the AU (African Union) highlighted peace and security as one of its priority needs. In its 2003-2004 Period Report, the World Bank emphasized its support for NEPAD. While international organizations may not specifically discuss CBR, it is nevertheless clear in the public pronouncements and international policy positions that support NEPAD that the development and reconstruction of Africa is paramount and universal. For example, in 2004 the Secretary General established an Advisory Panel on International Support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Table 1 is an attempt to very briefly point out availability of education, health and housing. These are some of the key ingredients of CBR services, but these services don't register as being available to youth. When they are available to the population in general, CBR is considered to be underway, but if they are available to post-conflict combatant youth they serve a purpose for which this forum is intended. The table is also an attempt to draw a correlation between CBR services and find out if countries that were not involved in conflict stood a better chance of providing health, education and housing to its people than those that did not. If the attempt had established its objective, then we would have mounted an argument that countries where these services are available are less likely to be involved in conflict.

An examination of the various definitions of CBR reveals that the significance of this intervening strategy lies on who, how and with what amount of effectiveness it can be adequately executed so that youth in general, and post-conflict youth in local communities in particular, reap its benefit. The inter-generational dimension of societies in the process of reconstruction partly highlights the inclusive nature of CBR. The elder generations are today the custodians of the region's vehicles for reconstruction and progress. Before they pass the torch, they must exhibit certain characteristics that demonstrate they are ready and responsible, which means they possess the unique quality to hand over the torch. Only with the right attitude and the qualities of leadership can security, opportunity, equality, empowerment and integration be assimilated by the youth.

**Table 1: Access to Basic Services: Health, Education and Housing in Countries that Were and Were Not Involved in Conflict**

... = data unavailable

Countries that Were in Civil War	Countries that Were NOT in Civil War	Period	Percentage of Births Attended by Trained Personnel	Health Expenditure as Percent of GDP	Education Expenditure as Percent of GDP	Housing Rights: Legal Provision	
						yes	no
Angola		1991-1996	...	...	...	...	...
Burundi		1991-1996	26	4	0.6	yes	yes
Congo Democratic Republic		1991-1996	...	...	...	yes	yes
Ethiopia		1991-1996	...	1.1	4	yes	yes

Mozambique		...	29	2.8		yes	yes
Uganda		1991-1996	...	1.6	2.6	yes	yes
	Benin	1991-1996	34	1.8	3.2	yes	no
	Malawi	...	41	2.8	5.4	yes	yes
	Zambia	1991-1996	43	2.9	2.2	yes	...
	The Gambia	1996	65	1.9	4.9	yes	no
	Gabon	1996	...	2.9	2.1	yes	no

Source: Extracted from *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlement* (London: EarthScan Publications Limited, 2003); *Human Development Report* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999 and 2001); *African Development Indicators* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1997). Housing Rights based on responses (yes/no) to the following questions: (1) Does the constitution or national law promote the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing? (2) Does it include protections against eviction?

### III. MEASURES FOR PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

#### *The Case for Focusing on Youth in Post-Conflict Africa: (A) Security*

When the Cold War between NATO and the WASAU Pact came to an end, there was a sigh of relief. Nevertheless armed conflict in Africa escalated. Many reasons have been suggested for the growing armed conflict in Africa ranging from religious, to ethnic, to availability of natural resources, to collapsed state, etc. In 2001, The Report on the World Social Situation cited “inequalities” as the main cause of armed conflict and not poverty. This paper, on the other hand, while not impugning the integrity of the report, takes the view that the main cause of civil strife in Africa is poverty. Poverty is glaringly multi-dimensional and exhibits inequalities of all kinds. When a people are poor, they feel they are not secure and are open to all sorts of vulnerabilities. The overwhelming majority of civil conflicts in Africa have been intrastate conflict; the majority of the combatants, therefore, are of different ideological, ethnic and class persuasions and more often than not one or two groups are convinced they are not secure and so must take up arms to defend and protect themselves.

A group that considers itself weaker convinces itself that it is not secure and is vulnerable to the onslaught of the more dominant group. When the groups take up arms against each other, more often than not the most vulnerable group in that country—the youth—feel the most insecure and may indeed be the most insecure and consequently the most vulnerable to abduction, easy recruitment or even voluntary surrender to the armed conflict. One factor that facilitates youth participation in civil strife is massive unemployment, which in itself is a form of insecurity. Unemployment in many African countries is as high as 50 percent, and youth unemployment may very well be 85 to 90 percent in many African countries (although an ECA 2005 report puts it as low as 21 percent). Regardless of how youth might have become combatants, at the end of the civil conflict s/he has to settle down somewhere and expects to receive health care, education, housing, etc. It may be in their original community; it may also be in a new environment. The fundamental question is: what can the youth do to become productive citizens and contribute to the development of their community while expecting to receive basic necessities?

Without serious programmes and policy initiatives, the candid answer to this question may be that they can do very little. At present, the political and policy levers are not in the least controlled by them, nor do they have a voice in designing policies or participating in decisions that affect their lives. In the first place, the individual and collective security of the young people has undergone severe stress and strain during combat, and their self-esteem has been severely damaged. As this paper evolves, however, we may be able to make some suggestions as to how the youth, whether or not they have been in civil conflict, can use their numbers as a bargaining point that will in the short and long term provide health, education, etc. for them.

Just over a decade ago, The Cairo Agenda for Action, which was adopted by the then OAU (the now AU) emphasized peace and security as the pillars of the region's development prospects. That agenda stipulated, *inter alia*, that "peace, security, stability and justice are among the most essential factors in African socioeconomic development. Without democracy and peace, development is not possible, and without development, peace is not durable." At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is the youth of Africa that will bear the burden of development. If they do not or cannot, the region will still suffer from the scourge and tragic consequences of civil conflict.

But why should there be such a focus on the African youth? Certainly in all societies development, with its trajectory, is a generational effort. In this effort, each generation employs the available technology of its era for development and progress. The most important technology on the global stage today is information/computer/communication technology. The use by African youth of this technology is not zero. For example, in 1995 there were four countries that had internet access, compared to fifty in 1999. Internet hosts also rose dramatically from 316 in 1995 to 10,703 in 1999 (*Can Africa Claim the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, The World Bank, 2000, pp. 154-155). Since it is the youth who make use of internet services more than adults, one can argue that the use of this technology by African youth is not bad, but when compared to their accessibility to weaponry, it pales in comparison.

In armed conflict situations, the young African is introduced to the technology of weaponry and soon assimilates its multi-dimensional use. In many instances, youth are more capable and savvy of the armaments than computer technology. They are proud of their skill in this trade and even boast publicly about it, but the results are always deadly socially or otherwise. In Africa in the 1990s, more than 2 million youth were killed in armed conflict, while more than 6 million were injured. During the same period, 20 million children were either displaced or missing in action as a result of armed conflict (Graca Machel, 2000). Their knowledge of the instruments of death is reflected in their own words. A 19-year-old with the Lords Resistance Army in Uganda noted with youthful exuberance:

"I did learn more things when I was with the rebels. I learned how to shoot, how to lay anti-personnel mines and how to live on the run. I especially knew how to use AK 47 twelve-inch, which I could dismantle

in less than one minute. When I turned 12, they gave me an RPG because I had proved myself in battle (Machel, 2000).”

These certainly are not (or ought not to be) the kind of skills our young should boast about. They should be taught to become more familiar with sustained development, if for no other reason than that the future of Africa will be very largely dictated by the extent to which they are involved in designing the future of their communities.

So, how did they get caught in the trap of armed conflict? As indicated earlier, poverty is a crucial factor. Because they are poor, they become vulnerable to the allure and temptation of what material benefits they may receive in the war zone. They cannot resist the threats of those who abduct them because they cannot defend themselves. By their very number, they are more prone to be recruited or abducted. Half of the population of Africa is eighteen and under, and their demographics make them an easy target. Sometimes they may enter armed conflict voluntarily. They may enter into conflict for other reasons. An important one is they are excluded from many concrete issues of development. When this is the case, they become even more insecure and an armed conflict situation offers the illusion of security. They feel that in the conflict situation, their vulnerability is either reduced or dissipates.

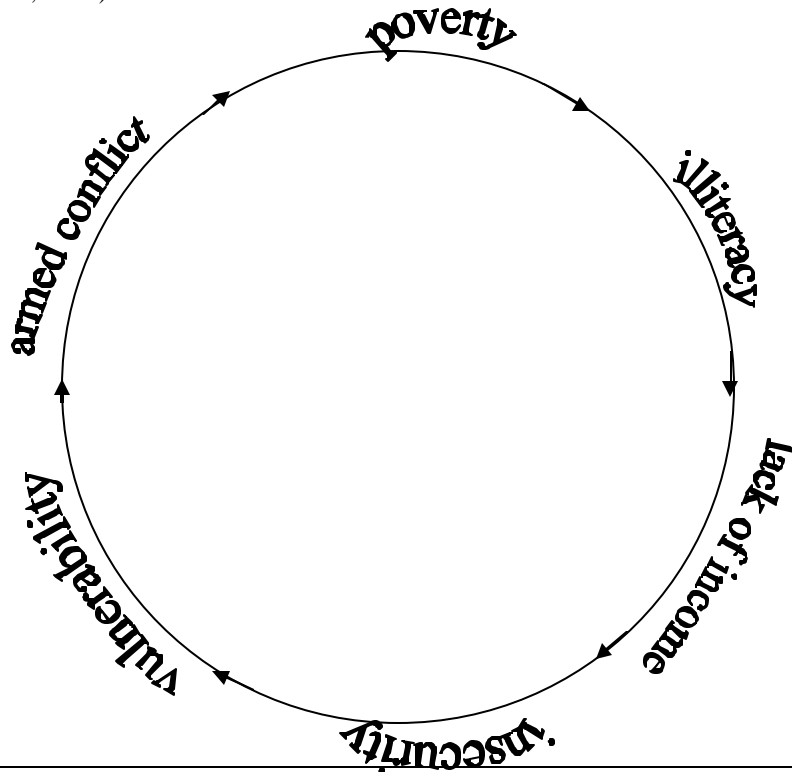
The not very rosy economic performance of most states in the region manifests itself in a number of areas, and one of these is youth unemployment. This of course has consequences including crime and other delinquent activities. Moreover, with the ongoing intensification and integration of the global economy, the African youth find themselves individually and collectively marginalized and increasingly more vulnerable. The fiscal responsibility of most states in the region has very little room for the inclusion of the large mass of labor force. When youth spend their important years in armed conflict, the future reconstruction and progress of the continent certainly looks bleak. As the economic malaise spreads, it affects both urban and rural youth. The latter, being in the distinct majority, is attracted to combat zones or succumb to the hardship of unemployment. Many migrate to urban areas and this eventually leads to the breakdown of the family.

The extended family has been pivotal as a cohesive force. As it disintegrates, the African youth become even more vulnerable for there is no immediate institution to offer security and belonging. Being in combat is an illusionary security condition in areas where no education or health facilities are available. After young men and women are disengaged from conflict, they may return to their village where their contribution is still nil, with little or no education, housing, health or recreational facilities, and so development, progress and reconstruction are still illusory. The poverty from which the African youth ran away confronts them once again in their local communities after deployment, and this time the situation looks just as bad if not worse than before they left their family. The family may have even moved or might have been displaced. Combat in Rwanda left 100,000 children homeless in 1994. In 1995 in Angola, 20 percent of all the children were separated from their families (Report on World Social Situation, 2001). The vulnerability condition has not left the youthful combatant. They were vulnerable

initially and so might have sought security in conflict. They returned home only to discover that they are just as vulnerable. They come with physical and psychological scars, yet facilities to take care of them are scarce. During armed conflict, youth become even more vulnerable because they are not protected. The chances of a female youth being sexually assaulted in combat are very high. While a male combatant may not undergo such experience as often as a female, he nevertheless runs the risk of being abused in other ways.

**Box 1: The Vicious Cycle of Youth Vulnerability and Armed Conflict**

Poverty spawns many offspring. Lack of resources for education means that a youth cannot get a job (even when it is available), and without income he will be illiterate. With illiteracy, a youth can either volunteer or be abducted to armed conflict where he can be just as vulnerable as he was before he entered the armed conflict. After the conflict, he may return “home” where things may be even worse because of the conflict of which he was a participant. The youth illiteracy rate for the African region—particularly in sub-Saharan Africa—varies from country to country, but the rate for young women is between 40 and 70 percent and for young men it is over 30 percent (UNESCO, 2002).



In many African states, expenditure on military hardware far surpasses the real needs of the state. While expenditure on health, education and housing may be inadequate, they serve the general population not just youth, who were probably not taken into account when the budget was done. The funds spent on armament could have been (or should have been) spent on health, education and housing. Examination of

military expenditures of African states that have been engaged in conflict outstrips that of human development. These are key indicators of progress, especially for the young. The importance placed on human development, employment and eradication of poverty cannot be overemphasized, as indeed was the case in the Copenhagen Summit, the Geneva Convention and in the Millennium Development Goals. Table 2 illustrates military expenditure of African states that have been engaged in armed conflict.

**Table 2: Military Expenditure of Some African Countries That Have Been or Still Are Involved in Conflict**

	Defense as Percent of GDP							Defense as Percent of Social Sector -- Health and Education
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	1999-2005
Algeria	2.3	1.9	2	2.7	3.7	3.8	3.5	15
Angola	20.8	15.4	10	30.4	7.5	4	3.5	200
Burundi	2.9	4.7	3.9	1.9	1.3	1	1	48
Democratic Republic of Congo	data unavailable						7.9	88
Ethiopia	10.2	9.5	8.7	8.8	2.6	7.1	8.3	250
Liberia	8.2	9.1	8.8	7.9	9.1	7.5	5.9	38
Mozambique	3.7	3.2	1.9	2.1	1.9	3.4	1.8	115
Sierra Leone	8	7.4	6.2	7.5	3.4	2.8	1.9	20
Sudan	data unavailable							unavailable
Somalia	8	4.1	8.2	8.7	9	7.9	8.1	unavailable

Source: Extracted from *UNDP Human Development Report, 1998-2005* (New York: Oxford University Press); *African Development Indicators* (World Bank, Washington, DC, 1997); *World Development Indicators* (World Bank, Washington, DC, 2005); *Can Africa Survive the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?* (World Bank, Washington, DC, 2000); *World Development Report 2000/2001*; *Attacking Poverty* (World Bank, Washington, DC, 2005)

When the GDP of these countries are examined, it is obvious that too large a share is spent on instruments of destruction and not on youth development. Youth get drawn into the conflict, and after deployment they become vagrants and of little value. The burden to rehabilitate and integrate them into their communities again is probably more expensive in many more ways than to lure them into combat. They are displaced; there are few health, education or housing facilities.

Inadequacies of reintegration spell doom for reconstruction and development. Both national and global policies for youth development are urgent and indispensable. National administrations in Africa appear to underestimate the severe consequences for their countries' futures if education, health and housing for their youth are not provided. These are the pillars of human development and without them rehabilitation, reconstruction and development cannot take place.

## *The Case for Focusing on Youth in Post-Conflict Africa: (B) Opportunity*

If Africa's economy grows at a decent rate, the percentage of young men and women in the informal sector may have the opportunity to function in the formal sector. The older folks who govern and lead the continent must first understand, identify and generate policies and institutions that can facilitate sustained economic growth so that the youth can function in a decent economic setting. This will, of necessity, improve the lot of the youth, the overwhelming majority of whom are poor and marginalized. If they are able to operate in a reasonably decent economy, their vulnerability will be reduced. When a household falls below the poverty line the youth become exposed to greater risks. Since a household constitutes an extended family—usually of about seven people—that household is in danger of reverting to a state of poverty when there is no opportunity to work. Since it is generally accepted that growth can flourish if the labor force is literate, the everyday living situation becomes harder when there are inadequate educational facilities. The opportunity to be literate and/or educated is significant because if or when youth are gainfully employed, the incentive to resort to armed conflict diminishes.

The inference in this argument is that education drives economic growth and economic growth reduces poverty. Therefore, the opportunity to have a job decreases the chance of the youth resorting to armed conflict. In the Africa region many leaders fail to provide opportunities to the young to participate in decision-making. Young people are drawn into situations where they create gangs to intimidate and terrorize opponents of politicians for financial reward. These gangs sometimes take on a life of their own and it is not inconceivable that they participate in civil unrest. After politicians use them in this manner, the youth are then left to fend for themselves with no health protection and no talk of educational opportunity. They are sent back home empty handed. They are not allowed to take any meaningful part in the political process. Policies that are formulated lack both the input and interest of youth. This marginalization of youth and their state of poverty, together with their inability to help design policies that affect their health, education and housing prospects, clears the way for them to be active participants in armed conflict and recurrences.

In post-conflict situations such as those in Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, etc. reconstruction rehabilitation and peace efforts have been troubling, but efforts are made to achieve those goals. For any of them to be successful, both the public and private sectors of the recently conflicted state must create opportunities that will accommodate and absorb the returning young men and women by, *inter alia*, providing returning combatants with health, education and housing opportunities. While the capacity to forgive and forget may cost nothing in material terms, it may be the most essential exercise for peace, rehabilitation and reconstruction in a post-conflict situation. Otherwise, the reminders of death and destruction will forever be present.

There must, of course, be financial and other investments in the societies where conflict has taken place, because the returnees have to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into their community. In post-conflict Sierra Leone, for example, a “cooperative society” was established. It is the National Savings and Credit Corporative League of Sierra

Leone whose main goal was training and education. There has been a luxuriant sprouting of training institutions in countries that experienced civil wars. These institutions facilitate short-term practical skill and know-how to the young men and women who are just returning from combat.

Another opportunity should be judicial and legal systems within whose frameworks the ex-combatants must operate. This opportunity should be directed towards training and educating them to operate within the framework of the law of the land. Functioning within the legal and judicial framework is as good as functioning within the political system, but we must take into account the fact that the governance system operating with transparency and accountability may be as rare a commodity as was youth participation in the governance of the society.

When child/youth soldiers return from the battlefield, the fundamentals of voting should be taught to them. Voting is an exercise, an opportunity that instills the responsibility, if not of democracy, of good governance. It is civic responsibility or duty that youth soldiers lacked before “duty.” In reintegrating them to society in order to keep the peace, a rehabilitating package must include such an exercise.

In the Africa Region, with its high rate of “youth bulge,” where the unemployment rate runs as high as more than 50 percent in countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, Angola and Mozambique, the battlefield becomes an attractive “place of worth.” Hand-in-hand with this civic opportunity is the economic opportunity, an exercise and activity in which job creation and entrepreneurship should be made available to youth soldiers. In this way, they will be serving the communities they left to go to war and into which they return.

Who supports this entrepreneurial and investment opportunity so that they would indeed result in reconstruction of the society so that there would be lasting peace? Armed conflict has devastated the region, and impaired its ability to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic, so any kind of investment is *de facto* both in human capital and/or human development. The majority of people infected with HIV/AIDS in Africa are youth 15-24 years old. There is little in-country capital to invest, so consequently the necessity to attract foreign investment becomes essential.

While decrying “youth unemployment” very eloquently by explaining the economic and labor market factors, the *Report on the World Social Situation, 2003* has left out an important factor of how some youth voluntarily enter the conflict because of job or other rewarding opportunities which are absent in their local communities. One must quickly add that this is a topic adequately covered in other World Social Situation Reports. Youth fight because of inadequate job opportunities, a situation which is itself reflected in the state of the economy of the country in civil strife. Unemployment, however, is by no means the sole factor of youth in conflict, and lack of employment opportunities should be viewed as only part of the problem. If rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration into the society is to be meaningful and functional, a comprehensive approach should be adopted. That is to say, the problem must engage the

returning youths from three angles: economic reconstruction, political reconstruction and social reconstruction.

It is in the political arena that good governance becomes crucial. Good governance is not only necessarily a democratic system of rule as is practiced in Western democracies, but a system of government in which the views, opinions and voices of youth are aired and listened to, and institutions created that will reflect their ideals and objectives. Youth should be able to have their views represented in the highest echelons of government and should become part of the decision-making process—particularly on issues that impact their day-to-day activities. In the Africa region, only Kenya, Cameroon and Namibia have youth portfolios that are represented in their national administrations. It will be hard to expect a positive reaction from youth if there is no opportunity to express their views. After all, they constitute half of the population in sub-Saharan Africa, and of what use will a governing body be if it excludes half of the views that constitute its population?

“Economic reconstruction” is just as demanding and must be just as much a cooperative venture as political reconstruction. Let it be said, however, that national governments themselves must be at the forefront in providing guidance and regulatory frameworks within which such a reconstruction will lead to the youth who were combatants being reintegrated into the society, and that such reintegration result in lasting peace and reconstruction.

This economic reconstruction in and of itself is necessary, but also not sufficient. Social reconstruction is vital. We tend to think of youth in conflict and their reintegration into communities as predominantly a male. It is not. It is a gender issue; meaning it affects male youth as much as it affects female youth and probably affects female youth in more devastating ways. As in the other situations of reintegration and rehabilitation, it is a joint and cooperative venture that needs the expertise of NGOs as well as the private and public sectors.

The components of reintegration and rehabilitation call for still other aspects of social reconstruction such as health and education. The failure to meet these basic human development needs may have contributed to those who voluntarily became youth in conflict. In the post-conflict era, as indeed in pre-conflict times, health and education are indispensable ingredients in combating poverty. The availability of health and education could be considered significantly crucial for poverty eradication and is probably more needed in post-conflict if peace can be lasting. The demographic dynamics of youth dictate that they are in a clear majority in Africa. The region cannot avoid conflict if the majority of its people remain illiterate, uneducated, unhealthy and homeless, are denied basic political rights and as such are not in a position to participate in decisions that affect their own lives. The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS alone is enough to call attention to the need for education, health and housing facilities.

*The Case for Focusing on Youth in Post-Conflict Africa: (C) Reconstruction and Empowerment*

By operating in their own community, post-conflict youth can experience empowerment. A central administration should be willing and able to share power with regional and local entities. If this is the case, even when unemployment is high youth in post-conflict situations are more likely to remain in their communities than fight against it. Empowerment is the devolution or decentralization of power, so that other authorities in a state have or are given the machinery to dispense and/or distribute power as they see fit and as is allowed them by these regional or local authorities. Indeed it is in the local communities that the influence of local and traditional authorities becomes crucial. They work to provide training/skill, education, housing and recreational facilities for post-conflict youth. They ensure that youth are not excluded from their community, even though many in the community resent those who participated in the conflict.

When the local authorities have power, decentralization increases the probability of the state institution being more responsive to the poor, most of whom are the youth. An important outcome of such a decentralization of power, especially in post-conflict situations, is that the youth may become more responsible because they have been presented with an empowerment mechanism to participate in issues that affect them directly.

In devolution of power in post-conflict situations, there is a community self-policing activity that not only maintains law and order, but may even contribute, however minimally, to environmental awareness that in itself can foster sustainable development. Furthermore, empowerment thrusts into the hands of the regional or local authorities of the state the instruments of fiscal and/or financial responsibility that would otherwise be a monopoly of the central administrations that may misappropriate funds for community development. This should not, in any way, wrest important national governmental responsibilities and policies from the central administration. The regional administrations must equally control the relevant powers.

In post-conflict situations in Africa, administrative capacity has not always been in abundant supply. The question has always been whether the central or regional/local administration should be charged with this responsibility. This means an example of administrative or political mobilization. Post-conflict Ethiopia launched a new education and health policy, the objective of which was to restructure education and health after the civil conflict. Regional development was looked upon as a national responsibility. The national administration created physical planning zones or departments within “the organizational structure of National Revolution Development Campaigns in each of the 14 administrative regions in the country” (Theshome, 1995). When the government established National Regional Self Government in 1992, such an act took some of the responsibilities from Addis Ababa and transferred them to local and regional authorities that are in a much better situation to direct the activities of the youth returning from conflict.

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Empowerment in a post-conflict situation renders an opportunity to evolve pro youth policies and politics through, *inter alia*, administrative and social mobilization.

Devolution of power develops positive coalition among the many conflicting variables and interests, for it not only brings those interests together but generates participatory democratic principles which will have to respect and include the views of youth if genuine mobilization and reconstruction are to take place. It encourages national administrations to work together with local and regional authorities whose post-conflict youth organizations and associations are given legal framework through which they can now operate.

Empowerment of youth in post-conflict situations in Africa is critical for lasting peace, reconstruction and development. This facilitates integration and when they consider themselves integrated into the society, participating in civil strife becomes less likely. Proper and efficient use of “local technology” provides opportunities to youth of all categories, both before and after conflict, to empower themselves or feel empowered when authorities are committed to direct them. In many African communities, the young manufacture pots that cool water during the hot season. This is an excellent example of the beginning of a cottage industry of sorts with local community technology, an activity that keeps youth engaged and by means of which they earn a living. In Kenya, there is a flourishing industry—rudimentary though it is—in which young people are very involved. They manufacture pots and pans for cooking and sell them. These are smiths of various kinds. They repair shoes on roadsides. In Kenya they are called “Jua Kali” a Swahili word that loosely translates to “hot sun”. This implies that the young are always working under the hot sun. These cottage industries flourish in the economy and have become part of the informal sector, but contribute tremendously to national economies. When they are regulated, streamlined and adequately organized, a large number of youth in the region become part of the formal sector. Their age, energy and vitality readily qualify them for such jobs. All transport drivers and conductors, i.e. the transport business in the entire sub-Saharan region, are made up of men between the ages of 14 and 35. It is critical to provide a more organized and structured system that empowers them to help develop their various communities.

#### *The Case for Focusing on Youth in Post-Conflict Africa: (D) Integration*

The fourth commitment of the World Summit for Social Development, which took place in Copenhagen in 1995, reads as follows:

We commit ourselves to promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

In the previous section of this paper, we labored with the issue of how to reintegrate youth in post-conflict situations into their society, and how to rehabilitate them. More often than not, such a task is thought to be handled by the adults in these societies, but all too often they do a very poor job of it—sometimes because of lack of

commitment, other times because they are ignorant of the wishes, desires, goals, aspirations and objectives of youth.

**Box 2: Youth Government for Youth from Conflict**

If youth representatives are brought together in a youth parliament, and there is budgetary allocation to them to wisely spend the funds on important projects that they deem useful and would be productive for those youth who are returning from combat in civil strife, with a condition that representatives of the returning youth participate in the decision-making process as to what they might need for rehabilitation, such a focus is likely to foster equality and representation in their society. Alternatively, if funds can be set aside, managed together by youth representatives and youth returning from civil strife along with NGOs and other civil societies, such organizations may stand a better chance of achieving social reintegration of ‘youthful combatants’ than do their adult counterpart who might run ministries of sport, youth and culture in national legislative bodies where the youth have no knowledge of what is taking place.

While it may be a difficult exercise, ex-combatant youth may each be assigned a mentor in a local community. That mentor would be responsible for mentoring and reintegrating an ex-conflict youth into society. In this exercise, the mentor learns the needs of a youth who was embroiled in a civil conflict, and the youth acquires skills to function productively in society. The generational gap between the young and the not-so-young is being bridged. Such an inter-generational exercise reduces at least the feeling of inequality, and perhaps even injustice, between the two generations. In discussing the issue of Intergenerational Equality, Robert Solo (1996) wrote: “If human development is the underlying goal of economic growth, human development should be equally shared between the present and the future.”

We associate lack of economic citizenship with one of the main causes of poverty, and when the extent of the youth bulge becomes evident, the youth will be excluded from at least meaningful employment; since they constitute the majority of the population, the conclusion is inescapable that they become easily dispensable, and without jobs they become easily recruitable for war. There is some relationship between civil conflict and poverty. The Human Poverty Index (HPI) outlined in Table 3 reflects that at some point they have been engaged in civil conflict of some kind, and that these societies have not facilitated integration or provided social protection to the returning “child soldiers”. African countries with civil conflict are compared with African countries that were free from conflict.

**Table 3: HPI of Some African Countries that Have/Have Not Experienced Armed Conflict**

Countries that Have Experienced Conflict	Countries that Have NOT Experienced Conflict	Human Poverty Index (HPI) Value (%)	HPI Rank	HPI Rank Minus HDI Rank	HPI Rank minus \$1-a-day Poverty Rank
	Mauritius	12.5	13	2	unavailable
	Zimbabwe	17.3	17	-24	-18
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	18.8	21	9	unavailable

	Botswana	22.9	29	4	-8
	Tunisia	24.4	31	15	15
	Kenya	26.1	32	-14	-13
	Congo	29.1	38	-4	unavailable
Rwanda		37.9	48	-29	-2
Zaire		41.2	52	0	unavailable
Uganda		41.3	53	-13	-3
Nigeria		41.6	54	3	9
Sudan		42.2	57	-8	unavailable
Cote d'Ivoire		46.3	63	8	18
Mozambique		50.1	72	2	unavailable
Ethiopia		56.2	75	2	14
Sierra Leone		59.2	77	-1	unavailable

Source: Extracted from *Human Development Report*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

### *The Case for Focusing on Youth in Post-Conflict Africa: (E) Equality*

There are many causes that have been promulgated for conflict in Africa. Chief among these is the region's multi-ethnic structure. Some more extensive analyses divert from such simplistic explanations and suggest that the causes and origins of the continent's civil wars may not be different from other regions. That is, the causes of civil strife are multitude and include ethnic, cultural, political, economic, social, poor governance, etc. (Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler, 1998; Soderbom, 1999; Elbadawi, 2000). This paper chooses to argue that one of the most important causes of civil wars is poverty, which is strongly correlated with lack of equality. To avail equality to all, and in particular to youth—be it youth who have participated in conflict or those who have not—political, economic, social and other resources must be distributed equally. It is now being suggested in this paper that equality may be achieved when there is a level playing field and when an intervention regime is enforceable with a legal mechanism such as Affirmative Action.

In many case youth who are returning from civil conflict situations must be given an extra hand to help them readjust to their community in order to become productive citizens once again.

While it is not the objective of this paper to discuss at length the refugee situation that results from civil strife, a brief mention of this tragic consequence may help highlight the amount of work that needs to be done in rehabilitation and reintegration for the reconstruction of the region. Africa accounts for just over half of the refugee population in the world, even taking into account the disaster caused by the tsunami in South and Southeast Asia and, to a lesser extent, the Horn of Africa. The refugee and displaced population in Africa is close to 25 million (UNHCR, 2005) despite a decline of about 3 million as a result of conflict resolution in Angola, Mozambique and Rwanda. Because youth constitute a large cohort of combatants, and because of the nature of the conflicts, there is a disproportionate percentage of women and children who are also displaced. In 1995 (UNHCR) the total refugee population in the continent was 11.8 million. Within the last decade, the figure has more than doubled. This statistic alone highlights the gravity of the situation. More frightening (and when taken in combination with the

persons displaced as a result of civil conflict) is the number of displaced and orphaned youth as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. There are no concrete figures yet on the refugee and displaced persons from the Darfur region of Western Sudan, but it is currently estimated to be 3 million.

This is an enormous financial burden on the meager budgetary allocation of the countries in conflict. Funds that should have been spent on human development are being expended on activities that do not benefit the countries involved in them. In this way, a substantial deficit is recorded in potential socio-economic and infrastructural production that would otherwise be spent on rehabilitation and reintegration of youth into their communities.

### **Box 3: The Untold Cost of Conflict in Africa**

When there is internal conflict in one state, there will (of necessity) be hidden costs in neighboring countries. This is largely due to the outward flow of refugees and other displaced persons. The military budget to fight these wars puts tremendous pressure on the national budget. At the same time, routes where agricultural products ordinarily go through are blocked and/or cut off, a situation that further reduces incoming revenue; foreign investment from private enterprises and international donor organizations as well as those of bilateral nature are suspended or stopped altogether. Trade with other countries is put on hold until there is conflict resolution. Human development, especially education and health, is severely disrupted. Youth who are so vital in the future development of the country have their education process put on indefinite hold; nothing could be more devastating to a country. One set of youth is deliberately obstructed and another set is actively engaged in conflict. There is also the environmental cost, and damage to social capital, a cost which impacts future generations. Because of the very nature of war, pollution becomes widespread. Streams, rivers, lakes etc. are no longer of any use to the people. We know deforestation has an adverse effect on citizens, but its effect on the environment is untold. The financial cost of the ten year conflict in Sierra Leone has been estimated at US \$2 billion, most of which has been subsidized by Britain, the ECOMOG, the United Nations and Nigeria. The financial cost of the internal conflict in Cote D'Ivoire is estimated to be about US \$800 thousand while that in the Great Lakes Region is approximately US \$4 billion. This enormous cost of conflict in Africa robs the continent of vital resources needed for reconstruction and development, while simultaneously and prematurely cutting down those who would be needed to implement the reconstruction and development.

Probably the sphere where equity may be most needed in post-conflict situation is among the genders. When women's rights are flagrantly violated this will affect all other areas of society. When there is no gender equality, negative impact resonates in human capital and human development. Human capital is a sine qua non for future generations. Human development is crucial for economic growth that, in turn, spawns socio-economic development. Education and health are indispensable instruments for progress, and ones that are probably needed more by women. When women lack education, this affects their ability to adequately socialize their children. When women are better educated, they have more control over their reproductive rights and can control the number of children they bear. When both men and women are educated, the chances brighten for higher economic growth and productivity, and nutritional and educational opportunities are

higher for their children. A woman with education equal to a man's has more positive influence over her children, an influence which probably will be an acute deterrent to her child/children participating in civil strife or being exposed to a situation where they are more readily available to be abducted into the "war zone." When a woman is educated, the quality of life of the entire family is elevated. When this is the case the child/children are more likely to be well adjusted and grow up to be youth with little or no cause to participate in civil strife, no matter if s/he belongs to the correct ethnicity, religion, political affiliation or whatever. Tables 4(A) and 4(B) depict quality of life in countries that were/are engaged in civil conflict, contrasted with figures of those countries that were not engaged in conflict. It must be mentioned that some of the countries that were not engaged in conflict are affected by HIV/AIDS or rampant corruption, or may have a low economic base.

**Table 4(A): Quality of Life in Countries That Were/Are Engaged in Civil Conflict**

... = data unavailable

	<i>Growth of Private Consumption Per Capita</i>		<i>Prevalence of Child Malnutrition</i>	<i>Under-5 Mortality Rate</i>		<i>Life Expectancy at Birth in Years</i>		<i>Adult Illiteracy Rate</i>		<i>Urban Population</i>		<i>Access to Sanitation in Urban Areas</i>
	Avg. annual growth rate (%), 1980-98		% of children under age 5	Per 1,000		1998		% of people 15 and above, 1998		% of total		% of urban population with access
	Distribution-corrected		1992-98	1980	1998	Males	Females	Males	Females	1980	1999	1990-96
Algeria	-2.3	1.5	13	139	40	69	72	24	46	44	60	...
Angola	-9.5	...	...	261	204	45	48	...	...	21	34	34
Burundi	-0.9	-0.6	...	193	196	41	44	45	63	4	9	60
Congo Democratic Republic	-4.5	...	34	210	141	49	52	29	53	29	30	23
Cote d'Ivoire	-2.2	-1.4	24	170	143	46	47	47	64	35	46	59
Ethiopia	-0.4	-0.3	48	213	173	42	44	58	70	11	17	...
Rwanda	-1	-0.7	29	...	205	40	42	29	43	5	6	...
Sierra Leone	-3.1	-1.2	...	336	283	36	39	...	...	24	36	17

**Table 4(B): Quality of Life in Countries That Were/Are NOT Engaged in Civil Conflict**

... = data unavailable

	<i>Growth of Private Consumption Per Capita</i>		<i>Prevalence of Child Malnutrition</i>	<i>Under-5 Mortality Rate</i>		<i>Life Expectancy at Birth in Years</i>		<i>Adult Illiteracy Rate</i>		<i>Urban Population</i>		<i>Access to Sanitation in Urban Areas</i>
	Avg. annual growth rate (%), 1980-98		% of children under age 5	Per 1,000		1998		% of people 15 and above, 1998		% of total		% of urban population with access
	Distribution-corrected		1992-98	1980	1998	Males	Females	Males	Females	1980	1999	1990-96
Benin	-0.4	...	29	214	140	52	55	46	77	27	42	54
Botswana	3	...	...	94	105	45	47	27	22	15	50	91
Central African Republic	-0.8	-0.3	23	...	162	43	46	43	68	35	41	...
Congo Republic												
Egyptian Arab Republic	2	1.4	12	175	59	65	68	35	58	44	45	20
Guinea	1	0.6	...	299	184	46	47	...	...	19	32	...
Kenya	0.4	0.2	23	115	124	50	52	12	27	16	32	69
Lesotho	0.8	0.4	16	168	144	54	57	29	7	13	27	...
Senegal	-0.6	-0.4	22	...	121	51	54	55	74	36	47	83
Tunisia	1.1	0.7	9	100	32	70	74	21	42	52	65	100

Source: Extracted from *World Development Report 2000/2001, Attacking Poverty*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 276-277.

Rather than writing about net primary enrollment in an attempt to illustrate inequality in education, this paper briefly illustrates “net enrollment ratio,” the “percentage of our chosen cohort who reach grade five” and their “respective expected years of schooling” for both male and female students. For this, see Table 5 below. For some of the selected countries, there are no statistics available. In a few cases, the war activities did not lend themselves to the collection of data and so we have none for them. The countries that have not been involved in conflict reflect a rather different picture. In net enrollment in Africa, pupils start school at age 5, and usually matriculate at about age 19. Abduction or recruitment (or voluntary service) to civil strife occurs within this age cohort where they have completed both primary and secondary education.

**Table 5: Net Enrollment Ratio for Some African Countries that Have and Have Not Experienced Armed Conflict**

... = data unavailable

Countries that Have Experienced Conflict	Countries that Have NOT Experienced Conflict	Net enrollment ratio % of relevant age group				Percentage of cohort reaching grade 5				Expected years of schooling			
		Primary		Secondary		Males		Females		Males		Females	
		1980	1997	1980	1997	1980	1996	1980	1996	1980	1997	1980	1997
Algeria		82	96	43	69	90	94	85	95	10	12	7	10
Angola		83	35	81	31	...	...	...	...	8	9	7	7
Burundi		20	36	8	17	100	...	96	...	3	5	2	4
Congo Democratic Republic		71	58	44	37	56	...	59	...	...	7	...	4
Cote d'Ivoire		55	58	39	34	86	77	79	71	...	...	...	...
Eritrea		...	29	...	38	...	73	...	67	...	5	...	4
Ethiopia		28	35	19	25	50	51	51	50	...	...	...	...
Mozambique		35	40	40	22	...	52	...	39	5	4	4	3
Rwanda		59	...	...	...	69	...	74	...	...	...	...	...
Sierra Leone		...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Uganda		...	...	...	...	82	...	73	...	...	...	...	...
	Lesotho	67	69	69	73	50	72	68	87	7	9	10	10
	Morocco	62	77	36	38	79	76	78	74	8	...	5	...
	Niger	22	24	7	9	74	72	72	74	...	7	...	2
	South Africa	68	100	62	95	...	72	...	79	...	14	...	14
	Tunisia	83	100	40	74	89	90	84	92	10	...	7	...

Source: Extracted from *World Development Report 2000/2001, Attacking Poverty*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 284-285.

A cursory look at the statistics on this table reflects the inequality between male and female students, but more importantly—at least for our purpose—we are able to say this is the age group from which “child soldiers” are made, so we have to prepare those who enter the battlefield for life after their return and for probable productive citizenry. How do we do that? Apart from providing education, health and housing, we have made some other suggestions. We now include in that list equality in voice. That is, a state of affairs in which those who return from combat zone are represented by themselves or their own peers on issues of rehabilitation and reconstruction in their communities; on issues of peace; issues about their frustration, rage and anger having been part of such tragic actions. They discuss their future and how to make it worth living. They were the

actors of war; they know the details of it so they can now inform others how to avoid it and make peace.

These incoming youth, or rather youth in post-conflict situations, now have an equal voice in designing and mapping out their future and thus the future of the continent. Apart from having an equal voice in peace, there must also be a peace forum where the only topic for discussion is peace and how to achieve it and avoid war. These fora are dominated by ex-combatants. They discuss their concerns and how to achieve set goals. They air out their views of what they want. The peace fora take many forms such as youth organizations, youth brigade, associations for the rehabilitation of former youth soldiers, etc.

#### **IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper set out to examine some of the consequences of the destruction caused by civil conflict and how to handle the devastation while at the same time attempting to incorporate mechanisms that will encourage youth to participate in the decision-making process with the hope that they would see themselves as part of the community, thus reducing the possibility of repeating their previous war adventures. It then went on to mention and analyze some CBR policies as well as policies and roles of regional organizations such as NEPAD and the AU.

##### ***Recommendations at the Local Level***

(1) Local communities must work closely with youth and post-conflict youth and all stakeholders, including families, in the search, design and implementation of facilities such as health, education, housing, recreation, etc., for post-conflict situations. They must also undertake research to discover the challenges and opportunities of CBR programs.

(2) Local and traditional authorities should actively seek and involve post-conflict youth in particular to participate in activities that provide some cash rewards while at the same time encouraging them to interact with the older generation. To this end, periodic meetings should be arranged and organized to, inter alia, discuss the youths' conflict experience, how to avoid it and ways to facilitate peaceful problem solving. The post-conflict youth, in particular, should be given the opportunity to air and voice their objections to the state of affairs in their community and have them addressed by all in such a forum. NGOs should be requested to serve as neutral observers.

(3) Local authorities must waste no time in cooperating with national authorities to tap and aggressively seek financial resources for timely and adequate delivery of humanitarian assistance, and such resources should be immediately available for post-conflict youth for rehabilitation soon after their return from combat.

##### ***Recommendations at the National Level***

(1) National administrations must incorporate CBR activities for youth in general, and post-conflict youth in particular, into their national development plans while promoting and advocating the importance of this intervention strategy.

(2) The constitution of African governments may have an article that stipulates that preference should be given to ex-combatant youth in particular, and youth in general, within a quota system that ensures them employment options nationally. This article may only be amended by a four-fifths majority of the legislative branch of government, and only after serious debate that highlights a national disaster if such amendment does not take place. This should help reduce the staggering youth unemployment and under-employment rate in the nation.

(3) There must be a perennial budgetary allocation for a youth parliament, designed and run by youth, in which youth issues are discussed. Resolutions made and sent to the National Assembly, where youth representatives have (by cause of law) the power to identify projects for youth development in which peace, reconciliation, reintegration, reconstruction and sustainable development projects—including youth employment and designing of national development plans and policies which have the imprint of youth—are debated before decisions are arrived at and made to become policies.

### ***Recommendations at the Regional and Sub-Regional Levels***

Sub-regional groupings such as ECOWAS, SADC, etc. should undertake peace building, peace making and peace keeping missions in collaboration and dialogue with the Regional Rapid Deployment Force and post-conflict youth combatants to generate and encourage peaceful resolutions to conflict.

### ***Recommendations at the International Level***

(1) The international community, having adopted several resolutions about youth and post-conflict youth situations, must enforce these resolutions including, *inter alia*, controlling the flow of arms to any government that is engaged in conflict and banning child soldiers and youth in conflict with the threat and implementation of sanctions.

(3) International donor agencies are the main source of financing for development and reconstruction in African countries. They should support and recognize youth parliaments. The youth parliaments are strategic mechanisms to seriously attend to youth and post-conflict youth decisions and aspirations. The youth of Africa constitute, by far, the largest majority of the population. If they are allowed to operate under democratic governance with appropriate safeguards, their activities can help elect a government. Youth parliaments become the ombudsman to make government more accountable of bad governance and bad governments.

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