

Youth exclusion, violence, conflict and fragile states

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Executive Summary

Background and concepts

This report forms part of a portfolio of work on youth focussed on two interconnected thematic areas: *youth, jobs and growth* and on *youth exclusion, fragile states and conflict* and complements work being conducted to develop a Youth Participation Guide for DFID staff. It is intended to inform a DFID Policy Briefing and a practical Guidance Note on addressing youth exclusion and unemployment. The objectives of the study are: (i) To scope out existing evidence and analysis on the links between youth exclusion, violence, conflict and fragile states and distil this information to enable DFID (and partners) to better understand the implications for poverty elimination, state and community-building, peace-building, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and conflict prevention, in order to address the issues more effectively in policy and programmes; (ii) To develop a conceptual framework that renders this information manageable while still reflecting the many dimensions of this issue.

The study involved a desk-based literature review and consultations with a small number of key informants from DFID, other donors, academia and youth groups. This study focuses mainly on people aged 15-24, but *conceptualises “youth” as a transitional stage in life between childhood and adulthood rather than as a rigid construct based on age*. It recognises the diversity of youth by gender, class, ethnicity and focuses on the multiple dimensions of exclusion that systematically disadvantage youth. It also takes a holistic approach to violence – recognising that in practice different forms of violence (e.g. political, criminal, interpersonal, extremism) may overlap and that some of the same structural and proximate factors may drive youth engagement in different forms of violence.

Youth exclusion and violence: the issues and evidence

There has been a recent gradual shift from discussions about “children” as the “victims” of violence to “youth” as a “threat” to security and stability. In particular, there have been multiple assertions that a “surging youth population” or “youth bulge” – combined with unemployment, urbanisation and other factors – can lead to violence and most recent analyses of conflict identify some form of “youth factor” in the generation or perpetuation of violence. There is *certainly statistical evidence of a connection between high relative youth populations and risk of armed conflict* and this can therefore indicate which countries are likely to be at higher risk of violent conflict and provide one means for prioritising when and where governments and other partners should engage with youth to take preventative action.

However, “youth bulge” theories have their limitations. This statistical relationship cannot be used to predict war or violence with a high level of certainty at a national or local level as many counties with youth bulges have not suffered violent conflict and there is limited data on sub-populations or regions with high relative cohort sizes. Furthermore, *while a correlation between a high relative youth population and higher risk of violence supports a causal claim, it does not prove causality* and reveals little about the processes at work and why certain young people engage in violence. A number of analysts also express concern about some of the language and assumptions made in the “youth bulge” literature that risks stigmatising young people. They stress the fact that *the majority of young people do not get involved in violence* and that young people can make a positive contribution to peacebuilding and development. They also challenge the common assumption that it is male “youth” that are a “threat” as *women make up 10-40% of armed forces and insurgent groups worldwide* and, beyond combatant roles, young women take on a variety of non-military support roles.

Although *young men and women get involved in violence for multiple, diverse and context-specific reasons*, there are a number of different (and to some extent inter-related) theories



about why youth seem to have a higher propensity than other groups to engage in violence. “*Greed*” or “*opportunity*” perspectives stress the material and other benefits like protection that engagement in violence might offer, particularly for those – like poor, uneducated youth - for whom the opportunity cost for engagement in violence may be low. “*Grievance*” perspectives stress the relative deprivation and social, economic and political exclusion suffered by youth (and other groups) as a motivation for their engagement in violence. The criminology literature discusses a number of “*developmental*” reasons why adolescents (as a group and particular individuals) might be more susceptible to engagement in violence because of their stage of biological, social and psychological development. Finally, the dominant theme in the literature on youth and violence (which to some extent overlaps with all the preceding perspectives) is that *the structural exclusion and lack of opportunities faced by young people effectively block or prolong their transition to adulthood and can lead to frustration, disillusionment and, in some cases, their engagement in violence.*

There is growing evidence from different countries that the social and economic statuses required for adulthood are increasingly unattainable for young people. Although the relative importance of factors that stall the transition to adulthood may vary from context to context, the following are the major structural factors that appear to underlie youth exclusion and lack of opportunity and are argued to increase the likelihood of youth engagement in violence:

- *Un- and underemployment and lack of livelihood opportunities:* In many countries, millions of young people are unable to access economic opportunities. Without access to employment or livelihood opportunities, most young people cannot afford a house or a dowry, cannot marry and their transition to adulthood is effectively blocked. Menial jobs with little prospect for advancement may also be a cause of youth frustration, embarrassment and social separation. There are many studies that suggest that youth un- and under-employment can cause conflict or lead to youth involvement in criminal activities - such as the drugs trade, armed groups and other illegal trade – that offer livelihood opportunities.
- *Insufficient, unequal and inappropriate education and skills:* Econometric analysis finds a relationship between low education levels and risk of conflict, but case study material also suggests that educated youth often play a key role in armed rebellions. In practice, it is often unequal access to education that can become a source for tension, which may lead to rebellions, conflict and violence. The nature and quality of education are also important, as the mismatch between the content of education and job opportunities available can be a source of frustration and school curricula can be a powerful means of mobilisation and indoctrination.
- *Poor governance and weak political participation:* Participation in the formal political system often does not provide an outlet for youth to express their needs, aspirations and grievances. In many cases, young people grow up in countries with rigid, conservative power structures, patronage networks and intergenerational hierarchies, which exclude them from decision-making and do not meet their needs. Where youth feel existing power structures marginalise them, violence can provide an opportunity to have a voice, lead and make an impact.
- *Gender inequalities and socialisation:* Structural gender inequalities, roles and socialisation practices can be a key factor in the production of violence. Women may get involved in violence because they see it as a means to challenge gender norms; men’s involvement may be influenced by practices of male socialisation and constructions of manhood/masculinity.
- *Legacy of past violence:* Protracted armed conflict can lead to a vicious cycle in which violence becomes the norm. Young ex-combatants often face particularly big challenges in returning to civilian life and at high risk of further involvement in violence.



These findings about the linkages between youth exclusion and violence accord with broader research on the relationship between inequality/exclusion and violence. However, it is important to recognise that there are many contexts where youth suffer high levels of exclusion but do not get involved in violence. Furthermore, *in a specific country or regional context, large numbers of youth often suffer the same conditions of exclusion, but most of them do not get involved in violence*. Key questions are therefore: What are the characteristics of societies and communities that avoid violence? What differentiates those who are mobilized from those who remain on the sidelines? Research on the determinants of participation and non-participation in violence is still in its infancy, but suggests a number of “proximate” factors that, given underlying conditions of exclusion, can lead to the mobilisation of specific individuals and groups into violence:

- *Recruitment, coercion and indoctrination*: Some people fight because they are forced to – either through physical abduction, processes of indoctrination and socialisation into violence or because of a lack of other alternatives for survival. Nonetheless, some research shows that there is an important element of volunteerism in young people’s participation - potential recruits are often offered a range of material and individual incentives to join violent groups.
- *Identity politics and ideology*: Some violent movements have clear political or identity-based ideologies, which may draw young people to their cause. Although religious, ethnic or class-based distinctions do not in themselves cause conflict, they can provide effective explanatory frameworks for grievances and powerful discourses of mobilisation, particularly (but not exclusively) for more educated youth.
- *Leadership and organisational dynamics*: More research is needed into why organisations choose violent means to achieve their goals and how group dynamics meet key physical and psychosocial needs for individuals and socialise them into violence. Existing research suggests that the role of charismatic leaders who exploit young people’s grievances to mobilise them into violence is key.
- *Trigger events*: Given a latent situation of conflict and tensions - trigger factors such as elections, political events, abuses by security forces, sudden economic crisis, policy changes and personal loss and trauma - can activate violence.

There is also a limited, but growing literature on factors that might foster resilience and prevent the mobilisation of young people into violence. There is some evidence that *migration, either international or internal, can be a key safety valve for frustrated young people*, although some analysts argue that disoriented rural migrants may be susceptible to recruitment into violence. Equally, it seems that *“strong communities” and young people’s involvement in associations* can build their social capital and sense of belonging and empowerment and act as an important deterrent to engagement in violence.

Policies and programmes to address youth exclusion and violence

Over recent years, an increasing number of international organisations (e.g. UNICEF, UNHCR, ILO, WHO, the World Bank) and bilateral donors (e.g. NORAD, DANIDA GTZ, USAID) have *highlighted the importance of working with youth and have developed policies and programmes in a variety of sectors in conflict-affected areas*. Their experience suggests that a critical first step in addressing the links between youth exclusion and violence is for an organisation to recognise the importance of youth as both partners in and beneficiaries of development and conflict prevention and to reflect this via a high-level policy statement. It is then useful to supplement a more general policy on youth and development issues with a specific guide on youth and violence prevention. A number of *key lessons* can be drawn from a brief examination of literature and discussions with key informants on programming related to youth, conflict and violence prevention:

- Base programmes on a context-specific analysis of the youth population and risk factors.



- Youth must be involved in programme design, implementation and evaluation.
- It is mistaken to assume that general development programmes automatically benefit youth.
- Address both structural and proximate factors leading to youth exclusion and violence.
- Work on violence prevention at both the local/community and the national level.
- Multi- or cross-sectoral programming can often be an effective way of achieving impact
- There is a need for creative programming in unaddressed areas e.g. identity, values / beliefs
- Focus on both non-combatant and combatant youth
- Girls and young women are still under-represented in policy and programmes
- Disaggregation of data by age and gender is essential to provide evidence on impact
- Risk assessment and management should be a key component of programming
- Information on impacts remains limited; there is a need for more systematic evaluation

In terms of the implications for DFID, a number of country offices are already trying to look more systematically at youth issues and incorporate youth programmes or dimensions in their work and would appreciate more guidance.

Key opportunities and entry points for DFID work on youth exclusion and violence include: the new focus on statebuilding and peacebuilding objectives in conflict-affected and fragile contexts; DFID's strong relationships with many partner governments; addressing youth issues in sector-wide approaches; using gender work to address masculinity and violence; work on inclusive growth and employment generation; using civil society fund mechanisms to fund catalytic community-based initiatives; using support to national statistic offices to ensure age and gender-disaggregated data; use DFID's work on radicalisation to improve knowledge base on issues of identity, values and beliefs.

Key challenges for DFID include: DFID's move from funding local-level projects and community-based initiatives; partner governments may unwilling to have a dialogue about youth issues or may implement policies that are detrimental to youth; working in areas outside state control; assessing and managing risks; lack of data about the situation of youth and lack of age-disaggregated data.

Recommendations

Key policy-level recommendations include:

- Be wary of employing a security framework towards youth – balance efforts to prevent the engagement of young people in violence with a focus on their positive role;
- Ensure policies and programmes work towards the inclusion of youth, rather than containment or appeasement;
- Consider the linkages between different forms of violence (violent conflict, criminal violence, political violence etc);
- Prioritise 'youth bulge' countries and countries with high youth involvement in violence;
- Look at the opportunities for addressing youth needs in urban rather than rural contexts;
- Ensure the Youth Participation Guide includes a thorough directory of resources on youth and violence prevention e.g. youth assessments, literature, case studies;
- Develop a "youth and violence prevention" guidance note alongside Youth Participation Guide which assesses the evidence and gives guidance on programme development;
- Commission a fuller review of different interventions to address youth exclusion and youth involvement in violence, what has worked and what has not and best practice for working with youth via different aid instruments.

Key programme-level recommendations include:

- Undertake context-specific analysis of the situation of youth and key risk factors
- Where possible, involve young people in analysis and programming;



- Do not assume youth will automatically benefit from general development programmes
- Look for opportunities to integrate youth issues into existing programmes e.g. design specific youth components; earmark resources for youth; target interventions at youth
- If under-funded, consider funding community-level initiatives via an intermediary
- Ensure collection of age-disaggregated data
- Support National Youth policies, but ensure they are properly resourced and actually implemented
- Where appropriate, conduct evaluations of the impacts of DFID's work on youth

Key areas for follow-up work and further research include:

- At a country-level, context-specific assessments of the situation of youth and particular risk factors are needed.
- The linkages between different forms of violence (e.g. political, criminal, ethnic), whether there are any differences in the processes by which young people get involved and whether they move from one group to the other.
- Proximate factors such as the role of leadership and organisational dynamics, the role of identity politics, ideas, values and beliefs, and trigger events in mobilising individual and groups of youth into violence – and how these might be addressed.
- The social characteristics of societies and communities that avoid major outbreaks of violence.
- More systematic studies of individual motivations for engagement in violence including specific studies of the motivations, role, experiences and consequences of young women's involvement in violence.
- The factors that prevent some excluded young people from getting involved in violence. How do they resist? What non-violent alternatives do they find?
- How can resilience to violence be built at a community level and what community processes and mechanisms protect young people from becoming involved in violent groups.
- The relationship between migration opportunities, including rural-urban migration, and youth violence.



1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

1. In 2007, DFID conducted a Youth Mapping Study, commissioned by the Youth Working Group of the Civil Society/DFID network on Children and Youth, to assess current approaches to youth in DFID's development cooperation in both policy and country assistance practice. The study found that DFID personnel at headquarters and country-level are increasingly aware of the need to address youth issues through DFID's work. It concluded that DFID needs a strategy to ensure its programme and development assistance works to the benefit of youth, with youth and in support of youth as an asset.
2. This report forms part of a broader portfolio of work on youth focussed on two interconnected thematic areas: *youth, jobs and growth* and on *youth exclusion, fragile states and conflict* and complements work being done to develop a Youth Participation Guide for DFID staff. It is intended to inform a DFID Policy Briefing and a practical Guidance Note for DFID and other donor country offices on addressing youth exclusion and unemployment. The ultimate aim is to enable DFID to better mainstream youth into its development policies and programmes and to provide country offices with the tools and guidance to do this.
3. Although a number of DFID's partners have recently produced publications on youth and violent conflict¹, there is currently no commonly agreed policy framework on the intersection between youth, exclusion and violence. There is therefore a need to scope out the linkages between these issues and the implications for policy and programming.

1.2 Objectives and scope

4. The full terms of reference for this study are attached in Annex A. They set out the following objectives for this work:
 - *To scope out existing evidence and analysis on the links between youth exclusion, violence, conflict and fragile states* and distil this information to enable DFID (and partners) to better understand the implications for poverty elimination, state and community-building, peace-building, DDR and conflict prevention, in order to address the issues more effectively in policy and programmes.
 - *To develop a conceptual framework* that renders this information manageable while still reflecting the many dimensions of this issue.
5. This study is not an exhaustive review of all the literature, policies or programming options. Rather it seeks to delineate the key issues and evidence as a first step towards developing policies and programmes in this area.

1.3 Methodology

6. This study involved a *desk-based literature review and consultations with a small number of key informants*. Key policy and academic literature on youth, exclusion, violence and conflict was reviewed to examine the nature of the evidence on linkages between these issues, where there is consensus, what is contested and where there are gaps. A full list of documents consulted is available in Annex B. This work also involved interviews with a small number of external experts and stakeholders from academia, NGOs and other donors plus some DFID advisers both at policy level (ERT, CHASE, PST) and in selected DFID country offices (mostly in countries with high youth populations and/or a history of violence). We also consulted a group of youth who work on conflict and peacebuilding issues, whose comments contributed to every section of

¹ See, for example, UNDP (2006) *Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and Development in Crisis*, UNDP: New York; USAID (2005) *Youth and Conflict: A Toolkit for Intervention*, Washington D.C: USAID.



this report, and clearly demonstrated the value of consulting youth directly. A list of people consulted is provided in Annex C.

2.0 Key concepts

2.1 Understanding the complexity of “youth”

7. The United Nations General Assembly has defined “youth” as the age between 15 and 24. However, there is no single agreed definition of whom and what constitutes “youth” and definitions vary between countries and organisations. For example, the lowest age range for youth is 12 in Jordan and the upper age range is 35 in a number of African countries including Sierra Leone and Rwanda. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF use the term “adolescent” for those aged 10-19, “youth” for those 15-24, and “young people” for those 10-24. There is also a degree of overlap between international definitions of “youth” and “children”, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defining a child as everyone under the age of 18 “unless under the law applicable to the child, maturity is attained earlier”.
8. In practice, *youth is better understood as a transitional stage in life between childhood and adulthood*, rather than as a rigid construct based on age. This new life stage can be characterized as a period of semi-autonomy, when young people experiment with adult roles but do not fully commit to them (World Bank, 2007). There is a growing literature on the transition to adulthood and what it means to become an adult in different cultural contexts. Achievement of adulthood can be determined by various factors such as achieving economic independence, leaving the parental home, getting married and having children. In some societies, particular social or cultural rituals may also mark the transition to adulthood. This transition to adulthood can be prolonged or cut short by several factors (see section 3).
9. It is critical to recognize that “youth” *is not a homogenous construct, but encapsulates several different experiences and diversities*, for example according to gender, class, disability, ethnicity, education and provenance (e.g. region, rural/urban). In some of the literature, “youth” is used as shorthand for young men and the potential “threat” posed by male youth. Young women can be invisible and doubly disadvantaged, and are left out of many youth-focused interventions in part because they are not perceived to represent a threat. In some cultures, female youth as a category scarcely exists, for example in Darfur females become women when they menstruate, before which point they are considered girls. Marc Sommers (2006a) has also noted that in many contexts, motherhood tends to alter the social status of female youth far more than fatherhood changes the lives of male youth.

2.2 The multiple dimensions of exclusion

10. Exclusion describes “a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live” (DFID, 2005: 3). Exclusion can take place in a number of arenas, from public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household. *Exclusion is multidimensional and includes different types of disadvantage which interrelate and compound each other*, for example unemployment, lack of voice and loss of status/respect (see box 1). The various dimensions of social exclusion vary from one society to another, as do the groups affected, because processes of exclusion are highly contextualized and depend upon local histories, social structures and categories. In Silver’s (2007) comparative analysis of European and Middle Eastern youth, she emphasises that analyses of social exclusion and youth requires a context-dependent definition of social belonging and what it means to be a fully participating adult. Although youth is not a dimension of exclusion per se, Silver highlights the importance of social



exclusion as a framework for looking at the intersection of youth with other dimensions of disadvantage, particularly the ways in which young people are excluded from full participation in adult life.²

Box 1: The multiple dimensions of exclusion

- Economic exclusion e.g. unemployment, underemployment, lack of livelihood, ownership of assets
- Political exclusion e.g. lack of political participation, voice and decision-making power
- Social exclusion e.g. access to services (education, health, water, sanitation and housing)
- Cultural status e.g. lack of recognition of group's cultural practices, discrimination, loss of status/respect, humiliation/honour, lack of identity

Sources: Stewart (2008); Kabeer (2006)

2.3 Conflict, fragility and different forms of violence

11. As the recent DFID conflict prevention policy³ makes clear, "Conflict exists in all societies at all times and need not necessarily be negative or destructive. Conflict is the pursuit of contrary or seemingly incompatible interests – whether between individuals, groups or countries". In contexts with strong governance and robust social and political systems, conflicting interests are managed and ways found for groups to pursue their goals peacefully; but *in situations of fragility⁴ where there is poor governance and weak political and social systems, grievances, disputes and competition for resources are more likely to become violent.*
12. *Outbreaks of violence are rarely one-off events, but usually result from longer-term structural processes of social and political disintegration* whether at a national or local level. Neither do violent conflicts – especially the protracted conflicts of recent years - typically occur in a linear cycle. Although levels of violence vary in intensity and there are usually recognisable phases of escalation and de-escalation, violence can be ongoing at a low-level for long periods of time. Indeed, several authors (e.g. Richards, 2008) argue that it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between situations of war and peace, with many countries in limbo situations of unstable peace or suffering ongoing localised violence. There are also increasing concerns about the impact of "non-conflict" violence such as criminal violence and the violent activities of some urban gangs,⁵ which affect many urban areas in Africa, including in South Africa,⁶ Nigeria and Mozambique, as well as Latin America (Barker and Ricardo, 2005).
13. In practice, *different forms of violence (armed conflict, political violence, criminal violence, interpersonal violence, violent extremism)* may overlap and the causes of and forms of violence may change over time.⁷ Equally, for many poor people, it is everyday

² Silver identifies several policy implications for Middle Eastern countries, based upon a review of European policies to promote the inclusion of youth: (1) literacy and high-quality education, coupled with on-the-job training and more skills training with schools; (2) job creation policies should not be neglected, e.g. expanding aid to youth entrepreneurship and formal sector self-employment; (3) establish or expand public or private employment and job search services, and universalise policies to reconcile work and family responsibilities (through tax system or family allowances); (4) offer youth a diverse range of positive outlets (e.g. arts, new technologies, infrastructure, sports, environment)

³ DFID (2007) *Preventing Violent Conflict*

⁴ The OCED-DAC (2007) defines a fragile state as follows: "States are fragile when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations". Stewart and Brown (2008) define fragile states as "states that are failing, or at risk of failing, with respect to authority, comprehensive service entitlements or legitimacy", which also puts emphasis on whether the population (rather than international donors) think a state is fragile.

⁵ Of course there are many different types of gangs and not all gang activity is necessary violent, but the increasing activity of gangs and vigilante groups in cities in Africa and Asia is a cause for concern.

⁶ South Africa has one of the highest rates of homicide in the world as well as one of the highest rates of sexual violence. Homicide is the leading causes of death for young men aged 15-21 and each year in South Africa, 11,000 persons die of gun-inflicted wounds (Barker and Ricardo 2005)

⁷ For example, the conflict(s) in DRC has been characterized by a variety of forms of violence for different reasons including a civil/international war between different armed groups and their international backers vying for



insecurity that is their major concern rather than larger-scale civil war or armed conflict. There has therefore been increasing recognition in both the academic and policymaking worlds that it may be more useful to focus attention on violence more broadly, rather than what is traditionally understood as “violent conflict” or “armed conflict”.⁸ This is reflected, for example, in recent work by the OECD-DAC and others, on “armed violence” which is defined more broadly as “the use or threatened use of weapons to inflict injury, death or psychosocial harm, and that undermines development” (OECD-DAC, 2008).⁹ This concept therefore encompasses situations including violent conflict, violent crime and inter-personal violence. In other words, armed violence occurs in multiple contexts – from societies ostensibly at peace, to those stumbling into crisis, affected by war and entering a recovery phase. This concept also recognises that such violence also tends to be highly concentrated in specific regions, countries, cities and communities. According to figures from the Small Arms Survey¹⁰, globally, armed violence kills hundreds of thousands of people each year and the majority of these deaths occur in non-conflict affected countries due to homicide and inter-personal violence. These figures also state that armed violence is the 4th most significant cause of death for 15-44 year olds worldwide and that most of those killed are young males, although the impacts reverberate on entire families and communities.

14. In terms of the causes of violent conflict and violence, *every situation of violence has its own unique and multiple combinations of drivers and dynamics*. Nonetheless, a number of different factors are identified in the literature that affect the risk of violence, whether armed conflict, political violence, criminal violence, interpersonal violence or violent extremism (see box 2 for a summary). *A distinction is often made between “structural” and “proximate” causes or risk factors*. “Structural” factors are pervasive factors that have become embedded in the policies, structures and fabric of a society and may create the conditions for violence (e.g. social, political or economic inequalities/exclusion; systematic unemployment). “Proximate” factors are those that contribute to a climate conducive to violence or the escalation of violent conflict¹¹ (although may be symptomatic of deeper problems) (e.g. economic shocks, access to arms, socialization)(FEWER, International Alert and Saferworld, 2004; OECD-DAC, 2008). In practice, especially in protracted conflicts or ongoing violence, causal factors and dynamics will change (e.g. development of war economy or what have been termed “cultures of violence”) which tend to prolong the violence.
15. Neither the literature reviewed nor the people interviewed for this study suggest any major differences in the underlying reasons why young people get involved in different forms of violence or violent groups, whether conventional armies, rebel groups, armed militias, political or ethnic violence, vigilantes, criminal gangs, violent extremism, or sexual and gender-based violence although it might be argued that political exclusion and group-based inequalities are a more important factor in political violence. *In this study we take a holistic view of violence and insecurity and look at the links between*

overall control of the state; localized clashes between rival ethnic and other groups over access to local political power and territory; and violence over the exploitation of DRC’s minerals which is linked to international mining interests and criminal networks.

⁸ Wallenstein and Sollenberg (2001) define an “armed conflict” as “a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths”

⁹ Although the total impact on poverty has not been measured as extensively as for violent conflict, we know that armed violence imposes a major development burden on states and societies – war costs more than two percent of GDP growth; non-conflict violence costs \$95-163 billion annually (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008). In Guatemala, for example, armed violence costs the equivalent of 7.3 per cent of GDP in 2005, far out-stripping spending on health or education (UNDP, 2006).

¹⁰ See the report “[Global Burden of Armed Violence](http://www.genevadeclaration.org)” at www.genevadeclaration.org, which states that globally, armed violence kills approximately 740,000 people each year and 490,000 of these deaths occur in non-conflict affected countries due to homicide and inter-personal violence.

¹¹ Some literature further distinguishes “trigger” factors, which may be single key events of acts that set off or escalate violent conflict.



youth exclusion and violence, whatever form the violence takes. We clarify as necessary the different forms of violence that different studies and evidence refer to.

Box 2: Factors that may increase the risk of violence¹²

- (i) **Security:** Weak capacity and control of state security provision; abuse of state force (human rights abuses, oppressive policing etc); presence of non-state security actors; availability of small arms and light weapons; existence of external threat; regional / border conflict; international military involvement; legacy of past conflict.
- (ii) **Political:** Weak political system (lack of openness, representativeness, weak political parties, weak national-local political linkages); lack of independence of judiciary; instability of elite alliances / political settlement; levels of corruption; flawed election processes; weak civil society; lack of independence of media; weak popular political participation; traditions of protest/dissent; destabilising diaspora engagement; weak conflict management mechanisms.
- (iii) **Economic:** Rapid economic decline / growth (and impacts on poverty, inflation etc); high unemployment levels; (real and perceived); high levels of inequality (especially if aligned with ethnic or regional divides); population pressure; youth bulge; urbanization; macro-economic instability; international economic instability; unequal and inadequate welfare provision (state and non-state), resource scarcity (land, water etc), abundance of high-value natural resources; organized crime / parallel economies; development of war economy.
- (iv) **Social (and cultural):** Unequal access to basic services; social status of minorities (women, religious, ethnic etc); ethnic/religious cleavages (especially if overlap with class); exclusion and marginalisation of minorities (e.g. women, ethnic groups etc); inappropriate education; weakened community dispute resolution mechanisms; absence of cross-cutting civil society organisations; lack of social protection mechanisms/ safety nets; tensions over language and cultural heritage; negative impacts of global cultural influences (via INGOs, TV, satellite).

Sources: DFID (2002) *Conducting Conflict Assessments: Guidance Notes*; UNDP (2003) *Conflict-Related Development Analysis*; OECD-DAC (2008 draft) *Armed Violence Prevention and Reduction*

3.0 Youth exclusion and violence: The issues and evidence

3.1 Overview

16. In recent years, there has been a gradual shift from discussions about “children” as the victims of violence (e.g. Machel, 1996; 2001; 2006) to “youth” as a “threat” to security and stability. *There have been multiple assertions that a “surging youth population” or “youth bulge” – combined with unemployment, urbanisation and other factors – leads to violence* (see Kaplan, 1994; Huntingdon, 1996; UN, 2004). In contexts where young people are increasing in number (both absolutely and relative to other age groups), have fewer opportunities for education and income generation and are facing the HIV/AIDS pandemic and increasing insecurity, there is mounting concern that these youth will get involved in violence and therefore threaten local and global peace, stability and development. Most recent analyses of conflict identify some form of “youth factor” in the generation or perpetuation of violence (e.g. Cincotta et. al., 2003; Urdal, 2004).
17. Whilst we know that young people make up a large proportion of combatants and perpetrators of violence and (as discussed below) there is statistical evidence of a connection between high relative youth populations and armed conflict, *some analysts have expressed concern about some of the language used and assumptions made about “youth bulges” and violence.*¹³ For example, Hendrixson (2003: 8) says that “youth bulges” tend to be “personified as a discontented, angry young man, almost always a person of colour” living in huge numbers in Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia and Latin America forming an “unpredictable, out-of-control force”. Others argue that there is a risk that “youth bulge” alarmism may lead to the drawing of simplistic conclusions and

¹² The evidence presented for each of these factors is highly variable in quantity and quality.

¹³ In practice, most of these criticisms are directed at literature which is weakly evidenced and tends to use alarmist language (e.g. Kaplan 1994, Huntingdon 1996)



the design of poorly-informed policy and programme approaches, which overlook the complexity of factors in specific contexts and the fact that *the majority of young people do not get involved in violence* (Sommers, 2007a, Barker, 2005).

18. DFID's Youth Mapping Study (Maguire, 2007) has described some of the *specific risks of a "deficit-based" (youth as a security risk) approach to youth*: it can lead to unsustainable programming based on appeasement or containment alone; it does not address the realities that it is young people who are amongst the primary victims of criminality, armed conflict or terrorism; programming in this way can threaten other development priorities; and this approach is contrary to any form of rights-based approach. Instead, Maguire argues that it is better to adopt an "asset-based" approach (youth as people with something concrete to offer both now and in the long-term) and look the positive contribution youth can make to sustainable peace and development. Indeed, recent literature on youth and conflict has begun to emphasis the positive role young people can play and the need to actively engage them in peacebuilding and development (Kemper, 2005; USAID, 2005; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Sommers, 2006a).
19. Another underlying assumption in some of the literature is that the "youth" that are a "threat" are male youth. Most studies of child or young soldiers implicitly or explicitly refer to young males as the perpetrators, while women tend to be portrayed either as the victims of violence or the primary peacemakers. Whilst it is true that women often suffer disproportionately from violence and can play invaluable roles as peacemakers, *women in fact make up 10-30% of armed forces and groups worldwide* (Bouta et al, 2005)¹⁴ and an estimated 100,000 girls are currently fighting in armed conflicts around the world (Plan, 2008). Female combatants have been central to the Palestinian uprising, Hindu communalism, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and the Maoist movement in Nepal – where women were estimated to constitute 30-40% of the guerrilla force (see articles in Moser and Clark, 2001). Beyond combatant roles, young women often provide non-military support – whether coerced or voluntary - to violent groups through domestic labour, disseminating propaganda, becoming combat trainers and encouraging or forcing children to go out to war (McKay and Mazurana, 2004).
20. *A major challenge in terms of assessing the links between youth exclusion and violence is the lack of systematic studies of individual motivations for engagement in violence.* In particular, there is a lack of research on motivations of the large majority of youth who do not engage in violence, whether in conflict or non-conflict countries. Nonetheless, there has been some research over the past few years, which examines the linkages between exclusion and violence more generally and between youth and violence specifically. The *evidence* broadly falls into two main categories:
 - (i) *Large-N-studies (quantitative)* that look at the statistical relationship between factors such as size of youth population and occurrence of violence across several countries. These studies are good for looking at overall structural risk factors and trends, but suggest rather than prove casualty and say little about the social processes at work. The scope of these studies can also be limited by the quality and availability of data sets, especially age-disaggregated data. For example, while cross-national demographic data is generally of high quality, data on contextual factors like unemployment is quite poor and difficult to compare.
 - (ii) *Smaller-scale case studies (mostly qualitative)* that look at the processes by which groups of young people get involved in violence or the nature of violence in specific localities. These studies are helpful for understanding the complex processes and factors at work and give some data on individual motivations. For example, analysis of outbreaks of post-electoral violence in Kenya in 2008 reveals that there were very different local causal factors and dynamics underlying violence in different

¹⁴ Regular armed forces very rarely comprise > 10% women, while some insurgent groups may have up to 40%.



locations (David Anderson, 2008).¹⁵ However, cases studies only analyse the processes at work in those specific cases. They do not allow for large-scale generalizations. They can also be impeded by data quality issues - especially when they rely on official statistics, which are variable in quality.

21. This section of the report will examine what the available evidence tells us about the linkages between youth exclusion and violence. The next section will give an overview of the main arguments about why youth engage in violence and ask “what is different about youth” compared to other groups of the population. The following section will then focus in more depth on youth exclusion and look at the evidence on specific structural factors that underlie youth exclusion and are argued to contribute to youth engagement in violence. The subsequent section will seek to examine a number of proximate factors that might help explain the differences between those young people who engage in violence and the majority who do not. The final section will look at factors that may increase the resilience of youth to engagement in violence.

3.2 Theories of youth engagement in violence

22. Overall, the *evidence we do have suggests that youth get involved in violence for multiple and diverse reasons*, which need to be understood in each specific context. In practice, there is usually no one singular reason why a particular young person participates in violence. Different individuals may join the same violent group for different reasons as Specht’s work with female ex-combatants in Liberia demonstrates (see box 3) (see also Weinstein and Humphreys, 2008).

Box 3: The recruitment of female combatants in Liberia

Specht (2006) interviewed girls involved in the conflict in Liberia and found a wide range of experiences, according to age, whether they were fighting or non-fighting, and their relative rank within the armed group. Girls cited a range of motives for enlisting, including ‘feminist’ ones such as to protect themselves and other women from (particularly sexual) violence, and to avenge such violence. However, other motives for recruitment were also mentioned by many girls, who either willingly looked for or were forced to form relationships with male combatants because they needed protection. Other female ex-combatants expressed economic motives, sometimes due to severe poverty and yet others desired material luxury items such as make-up and ‘red shoes’. Involvement in fighting empowered some women, but Specht cautions that it also rendered many more women inferior to men and vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Source: Specht, I. (2006) *“Red Shoes: Young and the Restless: Population Age Structure & Civil War”*

23. Despite the limited amount of systematic evidence on the reasons for youth engagement in violence, there are a number of overarching theories in the literature. These are variously based on economic, biological, social and political analysis and can be grouped under the following headings: (i) “Greed” or (economic) “opportunity” perspectives; (ii) “Grievance” perspectives; (iii) Developmental (biological, psychological and social) perspectives; and (iv) The “Blocked transition to adulthood”. Each of these perspectives will now be considered briefly – although it should be noted that in practice there is overlap between these theories.

(i) “Greed” or “opportunity” perspectives

24. The “greed” or “opportunity” literature examines the conditions that provide opportunities for a rebel or other violent group to engage in violence or wage war – either by providing the financial means to fight or by reducing the costs of rebellion.¹⁶ On the basis of

¹⁵ Anderson argues that the local dynamics of violence were very different in the Rift Valley Mt Elgon and Mungiki.

¹⁶ Theories of civil war are sometimes divided between those that focus on *feasibility* (where rebellion is feasible it will occur) and those which focus on *motivation*, which in turn has two variants, ‘greed’ and ‘grievance’.



quantitative studies,¹⁷ Collier and Hoeffler (1998 and 2004) concluded that there is a statistical relationship between economic variables and the risk of civil war. They argue that the availability of finance, particularly through the capture and extortion of primary commodities, substantially increases the risk of rebellion and civil war.¹⁸ Collier (2000) also suggested that relatively large youth cohorts may be a factor that reduces recruitment costs through the abundant supply of rebel labour with low opportunity cost. Both the theory and empirical analysis have been subject to critical examination (e.g. Richards, 2004; Suhrke et al., 2005), and while their most recent paper (Collier et al, 2008)¹⁹ continues to argue for a relationship between conflict and the structure of income and natural resources, the authors identify new variables as both significant and quantitatively important, including the proportion of a country's population who are males in the age range 15-29.²⁰

25. Thus, according to the “greed” or “opportunity” perspective, from the perspective of an individual recruit, rebellion is feasible only when the potential gain from joining is so high and the expected costs so low that rebel recruits will favour joining over alternative income-earning opportunities (Urdal 2007). For example, Weinstein (2005) has argued that in resource-rich environments, rebellions may soon become flooded with opportunistic joiners who exhibit little commitment to the long-term goals of the organisation and are instead primarily motivated by loot-seeking. This argument therefore focuses primarily on the material incentives for engagement in violence e.g. access to money, diamonds, drugs, “luxury” items etc; Nonetheless, some research has also focused on the importance of non-material rewards e.g. physical and psychological protection and status. For example, analysis of the motivations of young people who joined the RUF in Sierra Leone suggests that the use of “selective incentives” - including money, diamonds *and* protection – were significant predictors of joining the RUF (Weinstein and Humphreys 2008).
26. In practice, the factors that drive engagement in violence may inter-relate or change over time. For example, the war economy literature suggests that, even in cases where “greed” or the quest for resource rents were not particularly significant factors at the onset of a war, a war economy can quickly become entrenched due to the opportunities for enrichment it can offer “conflict entrepreneurs”. Furthermore, as Korf's (2007) work in Sri Lanka suggests, greed can in turn feed grievances as gains made by war profiteers feed grievances about identity, economic inequality and lack of political power. It can also be argued that it is the initial exclusion of individuals and groups and the lack of access to legitimate avenues to secure economic and other opportunities, which may make material incentives more attractive.
27. Aside from the argument made by Collier, the “greed” literature rarely considers youth specifically as a group or asks whether young people may be more likely to engage in violence for reasons of “greed” or “opportunity”. It might be hypothesised, however, that many young people are more *available* to take up the opportunities that engagement in violence offers. Equally, it might be argued that in situations where youth as a group

¹⁷ Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) study of civil war developed an econometric model using data from 750 5-year episodes of large civil conflicts between 1960 and 1999.

¹⁸ In terms of the mechanisms by which primary commodities increase the risk of conflict, Collier et al (2008) have identified three possible channels: (1) rebel movements may use force to extort goods or money during conflict ('rebel predation'), which can then finance the escalation and sustainability of rebellion (e.g. diamond-financed rebellions in Sierra Leone and Angola; tapping of oil pipelines and theft of oil, kidnapping and ransoming of oil workers, and extortion rackets against oil companies); (2) rebellions may be motivated by the desire to capture the rents, either during or after conflict; (3) resource-rich countries tend to be less democratic and more remote from their populations since they do not need to tax them, so grievances tend to be stronger. All three possible explanations may exist concurrently, although there is evidence that conflicts are more likely to be located in parts of a country where natural resources are extracted (Lujala et al, 2005).

¹⁹ Collier et al.'s (2008) updated database is a global sample of civil wars for the period 1965-2004 and potentially includes 208 countries and 84 civil war outbreaks.

²⁰ Other factors identified are: (1) whether the country was under the implicit French security umbrella; and (2) to a lesser extent, that mountainous countries are more conflict prone.



suffer high levels of marginalisation or exclusion, they are more motivated to take up these opportunities. This is the link to “grievance” perspectives.

(ii) “Grievance” perspectives

28. “Grievance” perspectives argue that relative deprivation or exclusion fuels conflict and that violence is a rational means to address grievances. These grievances might be economic – such as poverty, economic recession or inequality; political – such as lack of democracy, lack of minority rights or political participation; or socio-cultural – such as lack of language rights, destruction of cultural tradition etc. Central to “grievance” arguments are arguments about inter-ethnic or “horizontal inequalities”. For example, Frances Stewart (2008) argues that “horizontal inequalities” (defined as “inequalities in economic, social or political dimensions or cultural status between culturally defined groups”)²¹ are an important cause of violent conflict. On the basis of eight case studies in Latin America, Southeast Asia and West Africa (from protests/armed struggle in Chiapas (Mexico) to civil war in Uganda and Sri Lanka), *Stewart et al find that there is an increased probability of conflict occurring where socio-economic horizontal inequalities are high, especially when these are consistent with political inequalities* (see also Stewart, 2002).²² They stress, however, that they have found a *correlation* between horizontal inequalities and risk of conflict and that there are cases where inequalities are high, but widespread violence has not occurred (e.g. Bolivia) or where violence is not primarily identity-driven despite high horizontal inequalities (e.g. Guatemala).
29. There is further statistical evidence to support Stewart’s argument. For example, Gudrun Østby (2007²³ and 2008²⁴) looked at a variety of inequality measures and concluded that all were positively associated with higher risks of conflict outbreak.²⁵ *She found that countries are particularly at risk of conflict where there are regional inequalities and political exclusion of minority groups.* Institutional arrangements were also critical, as horizontal inequalities may not translate into violent conflict if there is a strong state capable of repressing dissent and the risk of conflict may actually increase with more liberal electoral systems (see later). For example, Østby and Soysa (2008) highlight state repression against disadvantaged groups in Mauritania (the black Moors - Haratin) and North Western China (the Uighur people).
30. *There is also a wealth of case study material that supports arguments about the links between high levels of exclusion or inequality and increased risk of violence.* For example, in their analysis of violence in non-conflict situations, Moser and Rodgers (2005) argue that there is a link between violence and unequal access to employment, education, health and basic physical infrastructure. They argue that situations of widespread, severe inequality heighten the potential for alienated, frustrated and excluded populations (particularly younger men) to engage in different forms of violence, including economic-related gang violence, politically motivated identity conflict and domestic violence. Equally, the work of Paul Richards (1996) on Sierra Leone suggests

²¹ Stewart uses the following indicators of horizontal inequalities across the different dimensions: (i) Political = political participation in the cabinet, parliament, bureaucracy, local government and army; (ii) Economic = ownership of assets (financial, land, livestock, human and social capital), employment opportunities and incomes; (iii) Social = access to services (education, health, water, sanitation and housing) and human outcome indicators (health level, educational achievements); (iv) Cultural status = (lack of) recognition of group’s cultural practices (dress, language etc)(p13)

²² In this case, they argue that both the leadership (because they are politically excluded) and the mass of the population (because they suffer from socio-economic inequalities) have a motive for mobilisation.

²³ Based on Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data from 55 countries between 1986-2003, Østby (2007) calculates welfare inequalities between ethnic, religious, and regional groups for each country using indicators such as household assets and educational levels.

²⁴ Østby (2008)’s quantitative data looks at whether various forms of polarization and horizontal inequalities affect the probability of civil conflict onset across 36 developing countries in the period 1986–2004.

²⁵ Østby’s approach illustrates a data challenge familiar to many studies of exclusion and violence. Little cross-sectional and time-series data are systematically collected, and states are often unwilling to collect such data. The current approach is restricted in time and space as DHS surveys are only available for a limited number of developing countries and only for a few years of observation (Henrik Urdal, personal communication).



that youth exclusion in a context of state decay and neo-patrimonialism were at the heart of youth involvement in the violence there (see box 5 on page 25). The case study material also suggests, however, that whilst social exclusion and horizontal inequalities provide fertile ground for grievances to grow, they are not in themselves enough to cause conflict and other proximate or trigger factors are also required.

31. Most of the literature on youth bulges and political violence takes this grievance perspective arguing that large youth cohorts facing unemployment, lack of political participation and urban crowding may become aggrieved, increasing the likelihood that they engage in violence. However, the question of whether or why youth in particular may be more likely to engage in violence as a result of grievances is not explicitly addressed. Rather, the implicit argument seems to be that either young people suffer more marginalisation and relative deprivation than other groups (which can be argued to be the case in some contexts like Sierra Leone – see box 5 on page 25) or that once aggrieved, they are more likely to resort to violence.

(iii) Developmental (biological, psychological and social) explanations

32. There are a variety of arguments in the literature on violence and criminality, which seek to explain the higher propensity for youth to engage in violence compared to other groups in terms of their biological, psychological or social development. For example, the criminology and psychology literature has long debated the relative importance of different developmental factors – biological, psychological and social – in determining criminal, violent or “deviant” behaviour. Whilst theories “individual”-level (and “nature”) theories dominated in the 1960s and 1970s, in the 1970s and 1980s the “meta” and “ecological” (or “nurture”) theories tended to dominate. A number of more recent articles have argued, however, that all of these factors are important. For example Cauffman et al (2005) find that “self-control”²⁶ (a psychological factor) is a significant predictor of criminal behaviour, but also that heart rate (biological factors) and various measures of spatial memory (neuropsychological factor) also predict criminal behaviour. In terms of social factors, Pratt and Cullen (2005) study what distinguishes social aggregates or geographical areas that experience high crime rates and find that the stable predictors of crime are racial composition of the population, measures of family disruption, economic deprivation and incarceration rates. This literature seems to argue both that adolescents as a group may be more prone to engagement in violent or criminal behaviour because of their particular stage of biological, psychosocial and social development and that particular individuals are more prone to violence and criminality than others on the basis of variations in these factors.
33. Whilst many are uncomfortable with the underlying biological or social determinism of such arguments, a significant number of books and articles on youth violence ground their analysis in what are essentially (socio-) biological or psychological arguments – for example portraying young males as more aggressive and prone to substance abuse and involvement in violent crime. This is essentially the argument underpinning the book by Hudson and den Boer (2004) about the potential threat to security posed by ‘bare branches’ (a Chinese term for males with no spouse or offspring) especially those who are poor, uneducated and transient. Other literature portrays “youth-hood” as a transitional stage characterised by intense physical and emotional transformations where a young person has energy and is trying to find their identity and place in the world. It is variously argued that this may at once lead young people to challenge conventional thinking, rebel against injustice, look for a cause or ideal and be more susceptible to influences by their peers, the media, strong leaders etc. Equally, some authors argue this transitional phase of life is critical in determining an individual’s attitudes and life opportunities and if thwarted, can have negative consequences for both the individual and society as that young person moves into adulthood. Finally, there

²⁶ In this study, “self-control” is determined by a variety of measures of psychosocial maturity e.g. future orientation, impulse control, consideration of others, suppression of aggression.



are a number of articles that look at the different motivations of men and women for involvement in violence. For example, Bloom (2007) argues that female suicide bombers²⁷ in Palestine become radicalised for different, more personal reasons (e.g. to avenge violence to self or loved ones) than men, who are said to be more motivated by ideological reasons.

(iv) The “Blocked transition to adulthood”

34. There is now a substantial literature arguing that there is a “youth crisis” in many parts of the developing world as a result of high levels of youth discontent and grievances. Noting some confusion about what the “youth crisis” actually means, UNDP (2006)²⁸ argues that if we understand “youth” to mean the transition from more established social categories of childhood to adulthood, *this “youth crisis” might best be understood as being due to this transition being blocked or prolonged*. The transition to adulthood is largely culturally defined and can vary greatly between contexts and between men and women. However, Curtain (2001) suggests that this period of transition involves a complex interplay of personal, institutional and macroeconomic changes that most young people have to negotiate and has identified at least four distinct aspects: (1) leaving the parental home and setting up new living arrangements; (2) finishing full-time education; (3) forming close stable personal relationships, often resulting in marriage and children; and (4) settling into a more or less stable source of livelihood. In Africa, for example, Barker and Ricardo (2005) argue that the common requirements for achieving socially respected manhood are: (a) achieving a level of financial independence, employment or income (and being able to become a provider); and (b) starting a family or being sexually active (because a bride price is common in most of Africa, marriage and family formation are directly tied to having income or property).²⁹
35. *There is growing evidence from different countries that the social and economic statuses required for adulthood are increasingly unattainable for young people*. For example Salehi-Isfahani and Dhillon (2008) have examined the stalled youth transition in the Middle East, where one quarter of young people are unemployed and unlikely to be able to afford housing, access credit, get married or start a family. The authors find that the root cause of this youth exclusion lies in the rigid institutions and social norms that mediate transitions from school to work and family formation – interconnected markets such as education, labour, housing and marriage. This stalled transition to adulthood has become known as ‘waithood’ and fosters widespread frustration and discontent among young people. Similarly, in the case of Cameroon, Jua (2003) argues that although for much of the post-colonial period, the social integration of youth was unproblematic, in a context of economic crisis and structural adjustment in the late 1980s, job opportunities shrank massively, marginalizing youth and reducing their opportunities for achieving sustainable livelihoods. The work of Marc Sommers on Rwandan youth also tells a similar story (see box 4 overleaf).
36. These cases demonstrate that there are key commonalities across contexts in terms of the forms of exclusion and obstacles young people face e.g. un/underemployment, poor educational opportunities, lack of voice, gender constraints etc. Yet at the same time, they show that *the relative importance of the factors that stall the transition to adulthood*

²⁷ Female suicide bombers have operated in Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Chechnya, Israel and Iraq and represent about 15 % of the total (220 women suicide bombers from 1985-2006 (Bloom, 2007)

²⁸ UNDP (2006) asks whether the “youth crisis” is (i) a societal crisis impacting on youth; or (ii) a crisis originating from youth and impacting on wider society? Much of the literature on youth concentrates on the latter issue and views high youth populations as a ‘crisis’ or a ‘problem’ to be contained. UNDP (2006) argues, however, that to some extent, youth is an in-between stage of life that by definition is characterised by a degree of angst, dissatisfaction and boundary testing. Young people all over the world often feel disconnected from the political thinking and behaviour of their parents and deprived of the opportunities they would like. To some extent then, it can be argued that all youth are “in crisis” - the critical issues are how deep that crisis is and what their options are for dealing with that crisis.

²⁹ There are also often specific initiation practices or rites of passage (e.g. male circumcision), which are key factors in the socialisation of boys and men through the region.



may vary from context to context and may include factors that are highly-context specific (like the housing regulations in Rwanda). Of course, the idea that the transition to adulthood is 'stalled' does not necessarily mean that young people are not taking on any adult roles. Indeed, in many contexts young people may take on some adult responsibilities – such as generating an income for their family – at a very young age. More research is needed to look at these youth, whether and how their engagement in some adult roles influences the likelihood of their engagement in violence. Furthermore, there is a need to conduct more research on how the exclusion of youth can continue to limit the opportunities and outcomes through adulthood and thus contribute to whole cycle on intergenerational exclusion.

Box 4: 'Youthmen' in Rwanda

Marc Sommers' research in Rwanda shows that the dominant preoccupation of most rural youth is to achieve adulthood. However, poverty and land shortages are leading to feelings of hopelessness amongst young people as the amount of land available for inheritance shrinks. Rwandan males despair of the opportunity to build houses on their own land and this has knock-on effects for their ability to gain independence, get married and eventually make the transition to adulthood. Sommers argues that failed masculinity (and femininity) is widespread in Rwanda, with the concept of 'youthmen' pervasive. Female youth also expressed a strong desire to get married and a new trend is emerging of young women seeking work to help contribute towards the house construction costs of their future husband. Many male youth and local government officials believed that the high price of house construction is exacerbated by Government restrictions on deforestation (which have more than tripled the price of roof tiles) and Government regulations on what constitutes a legally acceptable house (it has to be built of certain materials and have a tiled roof) as well as the requirement to build a house on the *imidugudu* (organised constructed village settlements) have also hampered the prospects of most young men to afford a house of their own.

Sources: Sommers, Marc (2006b) *Fearing Africa's Young Men: the case of Rwanda*, Sommers, M. (2006c) *Rwandan Youth Assessment Preliminary Report*.

37. The "blocked transition to adulthood" perspective clearly overlaps with the other perspectives discussed above as it conceptualises youth as a transitional stage in life and focuses on youth grievances (and some extent (lack of) opportunities). The underlying argument is that *the structural exclusion and lack of opportunities faced by young people in many (developing and developed) countries effectively blocks or prolongs their transition to adulthood and can lead to frustration, disillusionment and ultimately engagement in violence*. The emphasis is therefore not necessarily on exclusion *per se* but on the way that exclusion disempowers young people in particular by blocking their ability to take up opportunities to make their lives. The next section will now examine in more depth the evidence relating to the key forms of structural exclusion that underlie young people's frustrations and inability to obtain adult status and are argued to increase the risks that they will engage in violence.

3.3 Structural factors underlying youth exclusion and violence

3.3.1 Demography: the significance of the 'youth bulge'

38. As discussed above, there has been a recent tendency in the media and certain popular books to connect youthful age structures to increasing insecurity and susceptibility to conflict and to scaremonger about a "youth bulge" (e.g. see Kaplan 1994; Huntingdon 1996), particularly after the attacks of 9/11 with the New York Times asking 'Is the Devil in the Demographics?' This weakly evidenced literature has recently been complemented by more rigorous academic research and *there is now a fairly substantial*



body of evidence³⁰ of a correlation between high youth populations and higher risk of conflict,³¹ for example:

- Using a time-series cross-national statistical model, Urdal (2006)³² concluded that *youth bulges increase the risk of outbreak of low-intensity political violence*, namely internal armed conflict, terrorism and rioting. The statistical relationship remains strong, even when controlling for other contextual factors, for example level of development, democracy and conflict history (Urdal 2007). He also finds that youth bulges can become particularly volatile under different conditions. For example, the risk of terrorism and riots is higher when youth bulges coincide with periods of long-term economic decline and an expansion of tertiary education (see section 3.3.3).
- Another study by Staveteig (2005)³³ found a higher risk of civil war onset in countries with: political instability and undemocratic regimes; high infant mortality rates (a proxy for development); lower per capita incomes; and larger population sizes.
- In their “male age composition hypothesis” based on evolutionary psychology, Mesquida and Wiener (1999) show that one of the most reliable factors in explaining conflict (coalitional aggression³⁴) is the relative number of young men (< age 30) compared to men over 30.³⁵ They analyse data from more than 45 countries and 12 tribal societies and find - even controlling for income distribution and per capita GNP - that the ratio of 15-29 year old men for every 100 men aged 30 and over is associated with higher rates of conflict.
- A recent Population Action International (2007) report concluded that age structures have a big impact on countries’ stability, governance, economic development and people’s well being. Countries were divided into four categories³⁶: very young (e.g. Nigeria and Pakistan); youthful (e.g. Iran); transitional (e.g. Mexico and Tunisia); and

³⁰ Early evidence of the role of the so-called ‘youth bulge’ was mixed, but it has since been argued that this initial confusion was due to poor measurement of age structure and to the study of high-intensity wars exclusively and not low-intensity violence.

³¹ Indicators for violence conflict include: civil wars and insurgency-based civil wars (Stateveig 2005), as well as data from the Uppsala dataset (Urdal 2006; Cincotta et al. 2003) published annually in the *Journal of Peace Research*, which defines a relatively low threshold for conflict, and distinguishes between minor armed conflict (a minimum of 25 battle -related deaths per year), intermediate armed conflict (at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and an accumulated total of at least 1,000 deaths, but fewer than 1,000 per. year), and war (at least 1,000 battle-related deaths per year). Indicators for development include high infant mortality (Urdal 2004; Stateveig 2005) and national per-capita income. Data on political regime is usually taken from the Polity IV dataset which measures countries on a 21-point scale ranging from -10 (most autocratic) to +10 (most democratic). Other factors measured include: urban population growth; cropland and renewable freshwater available; HIV prevalence (Cincotta et al. 2003)

³² Urdal (2006: p608) defines youth bulge as “large cohorts in the ages 15-24 relative to the total adult population”. Urdal (2006)’s model was based on data for internal armed conflict for the period 1950–2000 and data for terrorism and rioting for the years 1984–1995. It covers all countries with populations over 150,000 (data for less populous dependencies were not available).

³³ Staveteig (2005) constructed a dataset that combined information on civil wars, insurgency-based civil wars, national per capita income, political regime, and other relevant trade and economic variables over 10 five-year periods from 1950-2000 in 174 countries.

³⁴ Mesquida and Wiener use the term “coalitional aggression” to refer to war and other forms of collective aggression. This concept is rooted in biological determinism, suggesting that “coalitional aggression” is a natural phenomenon, a part of human nature - In processes of “sexual selection”, young men use the resources available to them to attract a mate and reproduce and in some contexts war and aggression is the key or only route to this.

³⁵ Mesquida and Wiener investigated a myriad of societies and conflicts—historical and contemporary, Southern and Northern, rich as well as poor. They studied population size, with particular attention to young men ages 15 to 29, and the severity of conflict, breaking the data down both by country and by continent. Their research showed that countries with more stable young male populations tended toward political stability, while countries with large young male populations tended toward political instability—a thesis that Mesquida and Wiener suggested explains such diverse situations as the 1968 Paris riots, 1972 Sri Lankan insurgency, and World War I Germany.

³⁶ The four profiles are created by dividing a country’s population into three age groups – youth (ages zero to 29 years), mid-adults (30 to 59 years) and older adults (60 and older) – and using those proportions to track the country’s position along the demographic transition and to identify any age structural bulges (large proportions of individuals within specific age groups). Within the four major categories, a range of structures occur, although the countries within each category typically experience similar challenges and successes in their economic, political and social development.



mature (e.g. Germany and S. Korea). The authors found that countries with very young and youthful age structures are most likely to experience civil conflict. Countries in transitional category are less vulnerable to civil conflict and can experience significant benefits if countries take advantage of reduced dependency ratios (which allow greater personal savings and government spending). Countries with a mature age structure are the most stable, democratic and highly developed.

- Based on a data analysis from 180 countries and a literature review, Cincotta et al. (2003) found a high risk of civil conflict in 25 mostly African and Asian countries based on 3 key demographic stress factors: high proportion of youth; rapid urban growth; and exceptionally low levels of cropland and/or fresh water per person.³⁷ 10 countries³⁸ had reached critical levels in these three factors and are also experiencing excessive adult mortality (mainly due to HIV/AIDS), which the authors consider is an additional factor likely to increase risk levels for civil conflict.
39. *The literature on youth bulges is important, because it indicates which countries are likely to be at higher risk of violent conflict* and can therefore provide one means for prioritising when and where governments, NGOs and international partners should engage with youth to take preventative action. However, it also has its clear limitations. Firstly, as the table in Annex D demonstrates, *a statistical correlation cannot be used as a predictor of war as many countries with youth bulges have not recently suffered violent conflict* e.g. Malawi, Zambia, Botswana (for these three, the youth bulge measure is slightly inflated due to high HIV/AIDS prevalence), Burkina Faso, Benin, Syria, Nicaragua, and Bangladesh. Indeed, it can also be argued (e.g. Desai 2008) that the youth bulge presents a 'demographic window of opportunity' if coupled with economic opportunities (e.g. South Korea, Japan and China). A large youth cohort need not be a problem if there are sufficient opportunities for young people and they can be engaged in meaningful, democratic national projects. For example, Williamson and Yousef (1999) argue that once fertility rates decline, there may be a rapid decrease in the dependency ratio³⁹, which can lead to dramatic increases in national savings that can be invested in productive and job-creating investment.
 40. Secondly, most studies are based on national level data, *and disregard sub-populations that may be located in regions or neighbourhoods with high relative cohort sizes* (although there may be no bulge at national level). Where disaggregated age structure data exist, these can be used to assess the risk of localised violence. For example, Urdal (2008) has found a relationship between localised youth bulges and political violence in India.
 41. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, *a correlation between a high relative youth population and higher risk of violence suggests rather than proves causality* and, as Urdal shows, there are many intervening variables that are important. For example, Urdal (2004), reviewing 1950-2000 demographic data, concludes that countries with large youth cohorts do have higher rates of conflict than countries with smaller cohorts but he contends that there is no clear threshold as to how many young men make countries more prone to conflict. Furthermore, he adds that youth bulges are more likely to cause armed conflict when combined with economic stresses.
 42. Finally, *it is critical to re-affirm that in any of these settings, only a minority of young men (and women) participate in violence* (Sommers 2008; Barker 2005). To understand the specific factors underlying the engagement of particular youth in violence, *there is no substitute for an in-depth contextual analysis of the overall structural situation of youth and the proximate factors that make the difference between those who do and those who do not engage in violence*. It is only in this way that we escape from stigmatising

³⁷ However, other studies have failed to find any effect of either cropland scarcity or urbanization on armed conflict (e.g. Urdal, 2005; Theisen, 2008).

³⁸ These 10 'critical' countries are: Burkina Faso, Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Tanzania.

³⁹ The ratio of the number of people under 15 and over 65 to the working age population.



and assigning guilt to youth, particularly young males, simply on the basis that they young, unemployed, out-of-school, poor and male (Barker and Ricardo 2005). Equally, it is *only through such contextual analysis, that one can determine how best to support vulnerable youth and prevent their engagement in violence.*

3.3.2 Un- and underemployment: lack of livelihood opportunities

43. *In almost all countries across the world, becoming an adult involves earning a living, especially for young men. However, in many countries, millions of young people are unable to access economic opportunities and suffer widespread un- or under-employment.* In 2004, the ILO noted that, “while the youth population grew by 10.5 percent over the last 10 years to more than 1 billion in 2003, youth employment grew by only 0.2 percent suggesting that the growth in the number of young people is rapidly outstripping the ability of economies to provide them with jobs”. More recent statistics from the ILO’s Youth Employment Network (ILO, 2009) estimate that 66 million young people (15-24 years) are unemployed worldwide with the unemployment rate for young people up to three times higher than for adults. The ILO estimates that a much larger number are under-employed worldwide. In some countries, un- and underemployment are compounded by increasing pressures on economic assets such as land (see box 4), leaving some young people with a total lack of livelihood opportunities.
44. *Without access to employment or livelihood opportunities, most young people cannot afford a house, cannot afford a dowry, and cannot marry and their transition to adulthood is effectively blocked.* As discussed above, in the Middle East, work is a major rite of passage to adulthood, especially for young men, but yet the average duration of unemployment even for youth with university or vocational education is relatively high (Kraetsch 2008). For example, the time between graduating and finding a job is 3 years in Morocco, nearly 3 years in Iran and 2.5 years in Egypt. The marriage market is linked to the education and employment market; so long periods of unemployment delay the marriage age so that nearly 50% of men between 25-29 years are unmarried. Young women across the region are the most disadvantaged in their search for employment, penalised by both their age and gender. The high cost of housing in parts of the Middle East (8 times the average annual income) is another factor impeding marriage and family formation. This protracted period of transition from youth to adulthood has been termed ‘waithood’ and is mainly characterised by uncertainty, boredom, worry and anger (Kraetsch 2008). Al-Azmeh (2006) argues that it is among this kind of group of well-educated young people whose dreams of a stable “normal” life are thwarted and who are structurally unemployed or unemployable that radicalism emerges.
45. *Under-employment is also a major problem for young people. Menial jobs with little prospect for advancement may be seen as ‘dead end work’ and can be a cause of youth frustration, embarrassment and social separation* (Sommers, 2007b). There is often a mismatch between the education young people pursue and the nature of the job opportunities available with young people desiring to study prestige disciplines and the stigmatization of careers in labour. Coupled with a lack of options to pursue alternative employment strategies and a lack of transparency in the job search process, this can result in high levels of frustration for young people (La Cava and Michael, 2006). Evidence from Sri Lanka suggests that insufficient employment for educated youth with high aspirations led to fierce competition for posts, patronage and subsequent disillusionment and unrest and both the Tamil Tigers and Sinhalese People’s Liberation Front drew their cadres from educated and frustrated rural youth (Peiris, 2001). In some cases (e.g. North Caucasus – see Michael 2008), educated young people have extremely high expectations about what type of employment they will accept, refuse to be underemployed, and will do nothing while they are waiting.
46. *Although there is a lack of large-scale statistical analyses linking levels of un/under-employment to the risk of violence (mostly due to poor data quality), there are many case studies that suggest that youth unemployment can cause instability and conflict.*



For example, Sommers (2007b) describes how many of the thousands of urban youth who rioted in Liberia in 2004 were frustrated, unemployed ex-combatants (the youth unemployment rate in Liberia is 88%). Sommers argues that a fundamental problem is that mainstream youth employment approaches in West Africa focus on rural areas and the formal sector, but are unlikely to succeed as youth are increasingly concentrating in the opposite direction – in cities and in the informal sector. In another example, De Jong (cited in Peters et al., 2003) suggests that the regional uprising in Casamance (Senegal) could be traced back to youth disaffection and unemployment, caused by structural adjustment and the downsizing of the Senegalese state.

47. In a context of widespread youth exclusion from paid employment, *a minority of young people take the opportunity to make a livelihood by becoming involved in criminal activities*, such as the local drugs trade, armed groups and other illegal trade. For example, youth gangs in Nicaragua are argued to be a “form of ‘social sovereignty’ providing localised frameworks of order that allow for the coherent articulation of livelihood strategies in poor urban neighbourhoods within a wider context of failing state sovereignty” (Rodgers, 2005: 3). Unfortunately in some cases, gang activities are accompanied by violence.

3.3.3 Education and skills: insufficient, unequal and inappropriate?

48. A large econometric study of post-1960 civil wars by Collier (2006)⁴⁰ found that conflict is concentrated in countries with little education. He calculates that a country which has ten percentage points more of its youth in schools – for example, 55% rather than 45% - decreases its risk of conflict from 14% to 10%. In another econometric study, Barakat and Urdal (2008)⁴¹ concluded *that countries with (male) youth bulges and low secondary education are more at risk of conflict*. This link between lack of education and conflict is supported by recent case studies, for example Oyefusi (2008) found that young adults with low educational attainment are more willing to join rebel groups in the oil-rich Niger Delta, despite having lower levels of grievances than better-educated youth. *However, educated youth often play a key role in armed rebellions* and in practice most violent groups usually combine a small, relatively well-educated leadership who may be motivated by political or ideological factors with a larger number of less well educated youth, for whom participation may offer social status and economic opportunities. In the case of Rwanda, for example, the genocide was organised by political elites seeking to cling onto power, supported by the professional middle classes who feared a loss of privilege and opportunity (who also took part in the killing) with the main “foot soldiers” being drawn from the poorer and less educated rural youth who were motivated by a mix of fear, revenge and opportunity (Mamdani 2001).
49. Thyne (2006) also looks at the ways by which education affects the probability of civil war onset⁴² and found evidence for both the ‘grievance’ and ‘stability’ arguments. In other words, educational investment signals that the government cares about the population and is attempting to improve their lives, thereby lowering *grievances*.⁴³ He also found that education generates economic, political and social *stability* by teaching people skills of working together peacefully and resolving disputes Thyne (2006: p750) concludes that “educational investment indeed lowers the probability of civil war, especially when it is distributed equitably”.

⁴⁰ Collier’s (2006) empirical study was based on data collected from 161 countries between 1965 and 1999, and included 47 civil wars. Globally, there were 73 civil wars during this time period, but due to limitations in data about some of the countries where civil war had taken place, the sample size was reduced from 73 to 47.

⁴¹ Barakat and Urdal’s (2008) analysis is based on a dataset containing time-series data from 1970-2000 for 120 countries

⁴² Thyne (2006) added educational variables to Fearon and Laitlin’s (2003) model of civil war onset (a large-N analysis) and Thyne’s data set is time-series cross-sectional including 160 countries from 1980 to 1999.

⁴³ Although as discussed earlier, this can also increase grievances when there is a mismatch between the educational level attained and job opportunities available (see also Silver 2007)



50. In some settings, the lack of equal distribution of education amongst groups may be most relevant. *Education is a highly valued commodity and unequal access to education can become a source for tension, which may lead to rebellions, conflict and violence.* For example, deep-rooted grievances around inadequate and appropriate education resources are said to be one of the reasons for the ongoing civil war in Sudan (Bredlid, 2005). In Sierra Leone, young combatants cited unmet educational aspirations and the government's failure to provide an adequate education system as a key reason for joining rebel groups (Richards 2003; Peters and Richards 1998). Brett and Specht (2004) have described how the segregated education system, quality of education and teachers' attitudes in South Africa were instrumental factors in the political mobilization of youth, particularly in the townships. The issue of unequal distribution of education applies not only to primary education, but also secondary and tertiary education. UNDP (2006) notes that admission to university can embitter relations and lead to conflict. It cites the example of how discrimination against Tamil youth in Sri Lanka during the university admission process provided one of the main impulses for the emergence of militant movements in the North of the country during the 1970s.
51. Access to education is of course important, but so too is the *nature* of the education and training provided. *Expansions in secondary and tertiary education and the type of the education and training provided must to be linked to employment opportunities.*⁴⁴ As discussed above, conflict has been linked to the frustration of unemployed graduates, who are unable to find employment that matches their level of education and training or where their training does not prepare them for the types of jobs that are available - for example in the Middle East (Kraetsch 2008) and the 'educated unemployed' in Nepal (Dupay 2008).
52. *The quality of education is also important. School curricula can be a powerful means of mobilisation and indoctrination,* for example in Afghanistan (Spink 2005) and pre-genocide Rwanda (Obura 2003). Education has the ability to change values and attitudes, to reduce grievances and encourage domestic stability, but it can also exacerbate inequalities, raise expectations that cannot be met and replicate tensions in society. In Pakistan, Ladbury and Hussein (2008) argue that the style of education (in *madrassas* and state schools) leaves young people vulnerable to extremist narratives as it relies on rote learning and unquestioning acceptance of authority.⁴⁵ Alan Richards (2003) raises similar concerns about education in the Middle East, arguing that the emphasis on rote memorisation at the expense of analytical thinking has resulted in raised expectations, but a lack of skills to meet these hopes – although it is important to note that this pedagogical approach is widespread across most of the developing world and many parts of the developed world.

3.3.4 Voice and accountability: poor governance and weak political participation

53. Over the last decade, levels of youth political engagement have fallen and it seems that *participation in the formal political system is not providing an outlet for young people to express their needs, aspirations and grievances* (UNDP, 2006). In many countries, youth have been the victims of policy neglect and been excluded from decision-making on issues that affect them. Oyewole (2006) argues that in many parts of Africa, young people have effectively been "infantilised" by traditional elites. Instead of harnessing the potential of a new generation of youth, a generation gap has effectively built up between the 'led' and the 'leaders', with young people being the 'led' despite making up the

⁴⁴ Although it is important to note that Barakat and Urdal (2008)'s analysis did not find an increased risk of armed conflict during rapid expansions in educational attainment, The authors note that the data was based on *fatal* organised political violence and say it is possible that large cohorts of frustrated unemployed graduates are a greater risk of political unrest short of mass violence involving deaths.

⁴⁵ They also note that although there are not any major differences between *madrassa* and state schools in this respect, their findings suggest *madrassa* teachers may be more likely to have aggressive attitudes to minorities.



majority of the population.⁴⁶ Indeed, far from positive participation, the stereotype of youth involvement in African politics is that of political thug, party enforcer and violent youth who can be mobilised during election periods to intimidate political opponents and voters (Abbink 2005). In other words, youth are manipulated and mobilised when needed, but otherwise marginalised by the political elite.

54. Youth by definition want to take action, test the world around them and challenge existing structures of power and authority. However, *in many cases young people are growing up in countries with particularly rigid and conservative power structures and patronage networks, which exclude them and many other groups in society.* Many countries are beset with problems of poor governance characterised by low levels of capacity, poor accountability and corruption and enjoy very low level of legitimacy with the population.⁴⁷ Much of the literature on radicalisation, for example, has highlighted how young people in the Middle East see their governments as overwhelmingly unelected, unaccountable, corrupt and providing no legitimate outlet for youth discontent. In this context, it is argued that the 'old nationalism' is being replaced by Islamist discourse, which young people often find far more appealing (Richards 2003; Kepel, 2002). Furthermore, government failure to provide basic services like health, education and welfare provision not only feeds grievances, but can also allow other groups, including extremist groups, mafia, criminal gangs etc to meet these needs instead and build support for their cause instead e.g. Hezbollah, Hamas (Ladbury, 2005). In many contexts, young people also often suffer disproportionately from abuses by security forces and from a lack of access to justice to seek redress – something that can contribute to a sense of frustration and disempowerment.
55. Abbink (2005) highlights how *youth frequently voice their problems in terms of generational opposition, saying they receive too little attention from those in power*, whether in rural society (e.g. chiefs, elders) or cities (e.g. political leaders, party bosses, teachers). In many societies - especially in Africa's agro-pastoral societies - there is still a strict hierarchy of social roles by age group with youth expected to defer to elders and lineage seniors and the transition to adulthood often depending on the decision of more powerful elders. There is also still a pattern of moral expectation, which many young people now feel is being flouted by the older generation, who often do not respect traditional mores of reciprocity, mutual obligation etc. It is *frequently argued that in many contexts these generational tensions have led to a recruitment and involvement of youths in revolutionary and insurgent movements* e.g. EPLF in Eritrea, TPLF in Ethiopia, and NRM in Uganda (Abbink, 2005). The work of Stavros et al (2000) in Gulu District of Northern Uganda suggests that those organising or leading insurgencies often purposely play on generational issues, emphasizing young men's grievances towards adults and sometimes reinforcing the intergenerational divide.

⁴⁶ Oyewole (2005) notes the irony of some of the most suppressive political leaders in Africa having a background of youth leadership, spearheading and fighting for decolonisation and against repression.

⁴⁷ It is important to note that the relationship between democracy and conflict is not straightforward. Although open, democratic systems can provide a channel for young people to voice their frustrations through peaceful means, analysis by Urdal (2004) shows an inverted U-shape relationship between regime type and armed domestic conflict i.e. while mature democracies are able to manage tensions peacefully through democratic inclusion; stark autocracies are also able to repress violence and manage conflict through force. The most vulnerable states are those in transition. For example, Yousef (2003) describes how the emergence of a 'youth bulge' in Algeria coincided with economic difficulties and a state in transition – unable to contain conflict, either through democratic inclusion or coercive repression.



Box 5: 'Why we fight': A crisis of youth in Sierra Leone?⁴⁸

Paul Richards (1996, 1998 with Peters) argues that conflict in Sierra Leone was the violent manifestation of a rational expression of a "youth crisis". Richards says that young people in Sierra Leone reacted to exclusionary neo-patrimonial practices and state decay in the form of armed rebellion. Far from being mindless or random, youth violence resulted from the alienation of young people because of failures in the educational system, a dearth of employment opportunities and the negative attitudes and practices of elders – it was "a plea for attention from those who felt they have been forgotten." Richards characterizes the violence as a form of political agency where young people tried to create an alternative future free of patrimonialism. Whilst there were multiple reasons why youth joined up (some were originally coerced, some were lured by the prospect of profit and excitement at the diamond minds), the young rebel leadership was essentially an excluded intellectual elite and violence an intellectual project where practical consequences not fully worked through. Richards argues that even the appalling, and apparently senseless, terror that accompanied the war in Sierra Leone can be interpreted as a calculated, rational stratagem, employed by youth fighters in order to unsettle the victim. Richards also analyses how the products of American youth culture (mainly action movies and rap music) were re-interpreted in local terms as symbolizing a crisis of exclusion experienced by Sierra Leonean youth and legitimizing resistance against a repressive official structure.

Sources: Richards, P. (1996) *Fighting for The Rain Forest War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*; Peters, K. and P. Richards (1998) *'Why we Fight': Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone*

56. In these contexts where youth feel that the power structures in place exclude and marginalise them or force them to work for older men who do not then fulfil their reciprocal obligations, violence can provide an opportunity for youth to have a voice, to lead and make an impact and to gain control over their own lives. For example, Paul Richards (1996, 1998 with Peters) argues that the conflict in Sierra Leone was the violent manifestation of the rational expression of a youth crisis – a crisis of exclusion of youth who were alienated and lacked opportunities in the face of state decay, intergenerational tensions and neo-patrimonialism (see box 5).⁴⁹ Evidence from Sierra Leone as well as from the Niger Delta (Oyefusi 2008), Liberia and Guinea (Peters et al., 2003) highlights how opportunist militia leaders fill political vacuums, setting themselves up as 'frontier' rallying points for disaffected and marginalized youth.

3.3.5 Gender inequalities and socialisation

57. The forms and drivers of youth exclusion discussed above are mediated and supplemented by gender inequalities. Several analysts stress the importance of a gender perspective when analysing conflict and violence, stressing that the motivations, roles and experiences of men and women with respect to violence can vary and that *structural gender inequalities, roles and socialisation practices can be a key factor in the production of violence* (e.g. Barker and Ricardo 2005; Moser and Clark 2001; Bouta,

⁴⁸ Perhaps what is most worrying about the case of Sierra Leone is that more recent studies have concluded that the grievances that led youth to fight have largely been unaddressed since the cessation of hostilities and that youth still have very limited voice in community decision-making structures compared to their elders. The Women's Commission (2002) found that young people express anger that they are 'feeling marginalised' about the 'injustices' they experience and feel completely separate from the decision-making that affects their lives. Several studies have found that youth continue to find it difficult to accede to traditional authorities (Ginifer, 2003; Women's Commission, 2002) and, in his more recent research, Richards (2005) notes that the chieftaincy, 'customary' courts and traditional bride service feel unjust to impoverished rural youth. It seems that, although the peace process offered hope for a more transparent and accountable system, some ex-combatants found themselves once again exposed to the negative attitudes of elders towards youth, for example: "The chiefs levy high fines on the youth, if you are sent to do a job and you refuse ... up to now the chiefs are pressurising us" (SLA male ex-combatant, quoted in Richards, 2005: 578). It seems that young people largely continue to mistrust adults in positions of authority and remain vulnerable to possible future recruitment into militia. Indeed, very recent field evidence suggests a continued degree of tension between youth and elder community members in virtually every research site (Dale, 2008).

⁴⁹ Bangura (2007) challenges Richards' analysis arguing instead that there is a subaltern 'lumpen' youth culture in Sierra Leone that is anti-social and anti-establishment in orientation – a youth "in search of a radical alternative".



Frerks, and Bannon 2005). Exclusion and inequality can lead to a crisis of gender identity as illustrated by research on rural youth in Kenya (see box 6). When the traditional routes to becoming a man are blocked, young men may see violence as “the most readily available way of proving their manhood” (Francis 2008).

Box 6: A crisis of masculinity and increasing male violence in rural Kenya

Francis (2008) has outlined how the erosion of livelihoods and assets in rural Kenya has implications for gender relations as traditional male livelihoods (export crops, livestock/pastoralism, labour migration) have declined. Meanwhile there are new opportunities for female roles (food crop production, petty trade, informal services, beer brewing etc). Young males have found it increasingly difficult to fulfil traditional male roles and this has led to a sense of failure. Feelings of disempowerment are undermining the social value, identity and self-esteem of men. Francis notes manifestations of growing violence and insecurity amongst young males in rural Kenya: domestic violence; intergenerational disagreements; political violence; land clashes; vigilantism; increasing criminality and armed gangs spreading to rural areas.

Source: Francis, Paul (2008) 'Some thoughts on youth livelihoods in post-conflict situations: marginality, trauma and employment'

58. For women, although the trigger for engagement in violence is typically a personal tragedy, *some women also believe they can change patriarchal notions of women and society's gender norms through militant involvement*, as well as addressing other perceived injustices. Badran (2006) looks at the radicalisation of women in Muslim societies in Asia and Africa and finds that women with strong political grievances, close ties to radicalised men or who have lost loved ones in the fighting are at risk of becoming involved in extremist groups. She also finds that women may join these groups for the prospect of material benefit and greater self-esteem or due to religious pressures. In her study of female suicide bombers in the Middle East, in Sri Lanka, in Turkey, in Chechnya, and in Colombia, Bloom (2007a), also finds that amongst women's motivations are strong desires to escape a life of sheltered monotony, to achieve fame, and to level the patriarchal societies in which they live. Yet as the experience of female suicide bombers in Palestine demonstrates (box 7), the status and respect women have been seeking often does not materialise and afterwards, they may be viewed negatively and suffer further exclusion and humiliation for having gone against the norms of society (Berko and Erez 2007; Bloom 2007a and 2007b).

Box 7: Female suicide bombers in Palestine

Bloom (2007b) has examined how participation of Palestinian women in suicide bombings has had a mixed impact on the cultural norms of Palestinian society, which separated the sexes and restricted women to the private sphere. During the conflict, Palestinian women have increasingly become visible on the frontline, although not necessarily alongside men. Palestinian female fighters have not been integrated into the paramilitary terrorist factions; instead the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade set up a special unit to train female suicide bombers. By recruiting women, insurgent organizations not only boost their numbers through female bombers, but also by shaming men into participating. Indeed, Bloom argues that the drive to recruit women may be tactically driven, rather than by any desire for gender equality. Suicide attacks are done for effect and female suicide bombers receive eight times the media coverage than their male counterparts. Bloom (2007: p9) concludes that “rather than confronting archaic patriarchal notions of women and exploding these myths from within, [women] are actually operating under them. These include a well-scripted set of rules in which women sacrifice themselves ... martyrdom is the ultimate and twisted fulfilment of these ideals”.

Source: Bloom, M. (2007b) "Women as Victims and Victimisers: Countering the Terrorist Mentality"

59. As Gary Barker's work (2005 and with Ricardo 2005) in Africa and the Caribbean shows, the nature of gender socialisation is also critical. Based on an extensive literature review and interviews with young men and those working with young men in Uganda, South Africa, Botswana and Nigeria, Barker and Ricardo (2005) show that *male socialisation and constructions of manhood and masculinity in Africa are often key factors in the*



*production of violence and conflict.*⁵⁰ As discussed above, in many settings, 'big men' and elders hold the power to decide when younger men can own land, have access to family goods or wealth, and marry and Barker and Ricardo argue that younger men who do not achieve a sense of socially respected manhood may be more likely to engage in violence. Young men's participation in conflict and use of violence become ways to obtain empowerment and status, to achieve and wield power for those who perceive no other way to achieve this. It may be a way to question the power of specific groups of older men and to live up to a specific version of manhood. Young men may also find camaraderie with male peers in some armed groups and in some cases, male role models, surrogate fathers or substitute families.

60. Furthermore, *in some contexts, notions of manhood and masculinity may be implicitly tied to showing aggression*, including against women. Using violence to resolve conflicts is often valued and glorified, with more conciliatory attitudes being seen as "weak: and warranting the accusation of not being a 'real man'" (UNDP, 2007: 3). Similarly, salient notions of manhood are sometimes linked to the possession of small arms, and guns may symbolise empowerment, status and recognition. Research by Viva Rio⁵¹ (Dowdney, 2005: 72) found that young people tend to get involved in armed groups through a gradual process of socialisation: "Growing up in such a setting undoubtedly affects a child's socialisation process. In many cases dominant armed groups become part of a child's social experience, making the groups appear as legitimate social institutions." Equally, repeated exposure to images of extreme masculinity may also normalise and shape young men's identities in ways that equate manhood with violent expressions of power, physical strength and respect. As discussed above, in Sierra Leone, rebel commanders used the *Rambo* movie 'First Blood' to socialize children and teenagers into violence (Richards 1996).

3.3.6 A legacy of past violence

61. Protracted armed conflict can lead to a vicious cycle in which violence becomes the norm (DFID 2007). The post-conflict period is very fragile and an estimated 40% of conflicts which have ended restart again with 10 years (Collier et al, 2006). If the underlying causes are not tackled, conflict will persist and potentially turn violent again (World Bank 2003). Violence has a lasting impact on perpetrators, survivors and witnesses and prolonged exposure to violence can contribute to a general culture of terror of normalisation of violence (WHO 2002). As discussed above, at an individual level there is also evidence that children who grow up with violence – whether domestic violence in the home or violence in their school, workplace, neighbourhood or community - may be more likely to re-enact violence as young adults (UN 2006). Over the longer term, witnessing violence or being a victim of violence can condition children or young people to regard violence as an acceptable means of resolving problems - "prolonged exposure to armed conflicts may also contribute to a general culture of terror that increases the incidence of youth violence" (WHO 2002: p25).
62. A key issue for youth affected by violence is the risk of their further involvement in violence. *Young ex-combatants – whether in insurgency groups, conventional armed forces or militias – often face big challenges in returning to civilian life.* Having wielded power, some young men are reluctant to return to settings where they may once again be second-class citizens and feel powerless and marginalised again due to the prevailing intergenerational power differentials, as research in both Sierra Leone (Peter, Richards

⁵⁰ They stress the socially constructed, fluid nature of masculinities in sub-Saharan Africa – there are numerous versions of manhood and masculinity across the continent and images of young African men as a threat or delinquents are simplistic and dangerous and can result in misinformed responses. There are young men who have been combatants, but also young men who are survivors and victims of violence.

⁵¹ In partnership with IANSA (International Action Network on Small Arms) and ISER (*Instituto de Estudos da Religião*), Viva Rio conducted a two year international research process that aimed to compare child and youth participation in armed groups from ten countries: USA; Jamaica, El Salvador; Colombia; Ecuador; Honduras; Brazil; Nigeria; South Africa; Philippines.



and Vlassenroot 2003) and South Africa on ex-ANC cadres suggests (CSV 1998). Interviews conducted by Barker and Ricardo (2005) with young men in Northern Uganda also suggest that they are often fearful about re-integration in their communities because of prejudice related to some of the things they may have done (including being forced to rape girls or kill members of their own families) or because they fear re-abduction or persecution by the Ugandan military.

63. McEvoy–Levy (2001) describes how young people at the forefront of anti-apartheid activism in South Africa became ‘spoilers’ when they were suddenly asked to stand down while older generations took over. She argues that exclusion of youth from the peace process has translated into a blurring of the line between political and criminal youth. The link between youth political activism and later criminal violence is complex however. For example, Marks (2001) demonstrates that crime and gang warfare only got out of control in South Africa when the experienced anti-apartheid activists were no longer in place, the social movement was weaker and the political terrain had altered. Thus, in each context, *it is essential to look at the specific factors affecting the risks of youth returning to violence in the aftermath of conflict or rebellion* (Peters, Richards and Vlassenroot, 2003).

3.4 Proximate factors and mobilisation into violence

64. The discussion above has highlighted some of the structural factors that lead to youth exclusion and are thought to increase the likelihood of youth engagement in violence. However, as many analysts point out, *there are many countries and communities where levels of exclusion are high, but violence does not occur. Equally, there are many contexts where large numbers of youth suffer the same conditions of exclusion, but most of them do not get involved in violence.* We should therefore ask two key questions: What differentiates situations where exclusion leads to violence from those where it does not? What differentiates those who are mobilized from those who remain on the sidelines? As research tends to be conducted on situations of violence rather than non-violence and with combatants or ex-combatants, rather than non-combatants, the literature on the determinants of participation and non-participation in violence is still in its infancy.
65. One study that does look at the motivations of both combatants and non-combatants, however, is Weinstein and Humphrey’s (2008) comparison of the motivations expressed by both ex-combatants and non-combatants with respect to the civil war in Sierra Leone.⁵² They find that there is indeed evidence that grievances on the basis of social class, ethnic and political differences and personal dislocation and frustrations can lead to participation in violence. There is evidence that individuals are more likely to join a rebellion if they are economically deprived, marginalised from political decision-making and alienated from mainstream political processes. Yet Weinstein and Humphreys find that whilst they do predict rebellion, the same proxies for grievance that they employ also predict participation in opposition of rebellion and in defence of the status quo (i.e. counter-insurgency as well as insurgency). Thus, they argue that it is also necessary to look for other explanations about why particular individuals participate in violence.
66. As discussed earlier, there is therefore a need for much more systematic research (both qualitative and quantitative) into (i) the characteristics of societies and communities where violence does not occur despite underlying structural conditions which create the preconditions for violence; and (ii) individual motivations for participation or non-participation in violence. Nonetheless, there are a number of “proximate” factors given in the literature that are argued to explain the processes by which individuals and groups are mobilised into violence. These perspectives offer some insights into the circumstances under which - given underlying conditions of exclusion - young people may participate in violence.

⁵² Weinstein and Humphrey’s dataset records the attitudes and behavior of 1,043 ex-combatants in Sierra Leone alongside a sample of 184 noncombatants.



3.4.1 Recruitment via coercion and indoctrination

67. *There is no doubt that some people fight because they are forced to – either through physical abduction and ‘indoctrination’ or because of a lack of other alternatives for survival* (see literature on child soldiers, often produced by NGOs). Indeed, Weinstein and Humphreys (2008) argue that the widespread assumption that individuals have agency in making choices about participation is not supported by empirical evidence from Sierra Leone, where indiscriminate abduction was a key recruitment tactic of the RUF. The abduction of children and youth has also been a key tactic of rebel groups in other countries such as Liberia, Angola, Mozambique and Northern Uganda.
68. However, the implication of arguments about coercion tends to be that young people are not really responsible for their choice to fight and are being manipulated by violent actors (Kurtenbach 2008) and there have been strong critiques of this perspective, as it can lead to a detachment of the political, social and economic realities of youth. *Some research shows that there is an important element of volunteerism in young people’s mobilisation into violence* (e.g. Brett and Specht 2004; Peters and Richards 1998). Young soldiers who have been interviewed by researchers often perceive themselves to be fully adult and independent (Peters et al., 2003). For example, an ILO study in Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, DRC, and Rwanda found that two-thirds of all child soldiers interviewed said they took the initiative of enrolling themselves voluntarily (Dumas and de Cock, 2003). *In fact, in the same conflict, some young men may be coerced and some may participate voluntarily.* For example Schafer (2001) looks at the involvement of young men in RENAMO across different areas in Mozambique and questions the view that all young men who participated were coerced and psychologically brutalised to become crazed killers. She concludes that some young men were co-opted or recruited rather than coerced in dehumanising ways – whilst many young men said their recruitment was involuntary, they were not brutalised and some young men saw *participation in the insurgency as a viable economic activity* in the face of rural poverty, low-paid back-breaking work and potential harassment by government troops, especially where their communities were sympathetic to RENAMO.
69. Indeed, there is a growing literature on the “selective incentives” that are used to induce young people and others to participate in violence. *Potential recruits are often offered a range of material and individual incentives to join violent groups including resource rents, money, loot and land to positions of authority.* However, as Weinstein and Humphreys (2008), point out there can also be ‘push’ factors as well as ‘pull factors’ that incentivise individuals to participate i.e. an individual might judge that the individual benefits of joining the violent group outweigh those of not joining. A key ‘pull’ factor may be that by joining a violent group, young people are protected from violence. This raises the question on how voluntary is “voluntary” participation? The degree to which young people have the rational maturity to understand the causes and implications of their decisions is a contested area. At what age can people be held accountable? Wessells (2002) has argued that a child may have so few real choices that it is not realistic to see young fighters as rational decision makers.⁵³
70. Furthermore, those who are originally coerced into violent groups may later choose to stay even if they have the option to exit. However, this is usually a result of the process of “initiation” and “socialisation” into violence that occurs as they participate in violent acts. As Barker and Ricardo (2005) argue, *extreme violence and brutality are not innate behaviours, but are learned via processes of indoctrination, initiation modelling, reinforcement, shame, threats and coercion.* Insurgency groups often choose the youngest boys, who are more likely to feel powerless and susceptible to be traumatised and malleable as a result on initiation practices. Nearly all armed movements – rebel groups and regular armies – involve some kind of initiation rituals. In Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC and Northern Uganda, the initiation is mostly traumatic involving the forced

⁵³ This question of course has cross-cultural dimensions according to the age at which children become adults.



use of violence against family members, forced rape, forced cannibalism, use of drugs and alcohol, and shame-inducing indoctrination (see box 8 below on RENAMO and UNITA). In some cases, violent imagery, political education and ideological discourse are also used to recruit and socialise young people into violence.

Box 8: Recruitment and initiation into rebel groups in Angola and Mozambique

In her ethnographic study of the child soldiers in UNITA (Angola) and RENAMO (Mozambique), Honwana (2006) shows that the initiation of young men into violence is a carefully orchestrated process of identity reconfiguration aimed at cutting their links with society and transforming boys into merciless killers. Nonetheless, she argues that despite the fact that majority of the boys she interviewed had been forced to enter the military, they were not 'empty vessels' into whom violence was poured or from whom violent behaviour was coerced. Instead, she says that having started out as victims, many boys were converted into perpetrators of the most violent and atrocious deeds. Yet the process is complex and Honwana shows how the acts of violence of which they were both victims and perpetrators were mutually reinforcing. Some boys were most victimised in the very act of murdering others - the more closely connected they were with their victims, the more intense and complex their own victimisation. The tragedy is that their identification with those whom they mercilessly killed only wed them more irrevocably to the identity of soldier.

Source: Honwana, A.M. (2006) *Child Soldiers in Africa*.

3.4.2 Identity politics and ideology

71. *Some violent movements have clear political or identity-based (ethnic, religious, class-based) ideologies, which may draw young people to their cause.* For example, literature on processes of radicalisation notes the importance of a legitimising "single narrative" which binds together multiple sources of exclusion and resentment and proposes a simple solution e.g. Islamist state (DFID 2008). Often such narratives will draw on collective memory and trauma and recall and reconstruct previous episodes of violence or mistreatment against a particular group as a means to instil fear and resentment and mobilise people into violence – this was clearly the case in Rwanda, for example, when the genocidal propaganda continually emphasised past persecution of the Hutu by the Tutsi and called for "Hutu unity" in the face of a new "Tutsi threat" (Chrétien et al 1995).
72. Religion and ethnicity can be particularly powerful legitimising discourses to explain and offer solutions to people's predicaments, given their apparently symbolic rather than material nature (i.e. based on belief, hope, supposed cultural ties or differences) (see Turton, 1997). *Although religious, ethnic or class-based distinctions do not in themselves cause conflict, they can provide effective explanatory frameworks for grievances and powerful discourses of mobilisation*, particularly when inequality and discrimination is institutionalised on religious or ethnic lines (Stewart 2008; SFTF 2000).
73. It is sometimes argued, however, that *those movements without a clear political ideology (e.g. RUF in Sierra Leone, LRA in Uganda) are the most prone to using violence as an end in itself* – providing young men with power, income and women – and using extreme violence. In many cases these movements have alienated the rural populations they were supposed to liberate and therefore have turned to forced recruitment (Abdullah 1998). It is also true that some movements with clear political ideologies (e.g. Tanzania People's Defence Force; the ANC in South Africa) do promote some constraint in the use of physical violence. However, the same insurgency may have different meanings for different youth. For the educated, the rebellion may have political undertones; for the less educated it may be about following a "big man" who distributes weapons and booty and offers status by participating in violence. For example, Weinstein (2007) argues, that organisations that use identity as a basis for recruitment systematically recruit more educated individuals than those financing recruitment from resource rents. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that once violence starts, it can to some extent take on its own logic and the original motivations for the violence, including political demands can be lost (Benard 2005).



3.4.3 Leadership and organisational dynamics

74. A relatively under-studied area is the organisational dynamics of violent groups and the relationships and interactions between different group members. *A key question is what makes an organisation suddenly choose violent means or see violence as a legitimate response?* For example, how and why did Italy's Red Brigades turn from an idealistic student youth movement to one of Europe's biggest terrorist organisations? What were the factors behind the changing strategy of the ANC in South Africa when it began to use tactics of violence and over two decades of peaceful political action? This is a key area where further research is needed.
75. *Another key question concerns the relationships between the members of violent groups.* For example, Benard et al (2005) outline what happens once young people join a violent group and how *a process of "socialization" into extremism or violence can occur through group and organizational dynamics that foster inclusion, group cohesion and loyalty*, often enhanced by acts of violence which give group members a sense of a common fate. Like other forms of social institution or organisation, *violent groups can also play important roles in offering individuals status, protection, a positive identity, and substitute family or father figure for young people.* In many cases, group members - especially by young men and boys who lack male role models and guidance - emulate leaders of insurgency movements. Benard et al (2005)⁵⁴ emphasise how membership of extremist movements can provide important social and psychological needs to "identity-seeking" young people, whether those (usually a minority) who are highly-educated, aspirational and motivated by ideas or those who may be social misfits or excluded and find it difficult to obtain protection, friendship and acceptance elsewhere (the majority).
76. Some literature also notes *the role of charismatic leaders and elites who exploit young people's grievances and mobilise them into violence.* Zakaria (2006) has highlighted the role of 'agents provocateurs' (third party secret agents who deliberately exacerbate conflicts for personal gain) in local conflicts across South Africa. These agents include aggrieved politicians, religious demagogues and greedy multinationals. In Sierra Leone, rubber and diamond miners encouraged youth to stir up trouble so that the illegal mining and export of diamonds can continue outside official control. In many parts of Africa, for example during the 2008 violence in Kenya and ongoing violence in Zimbabwe, party elites will recruit excluded youth into their "youth wing" and often use them to intimidate and brutalise the population. In Pakistan, Ladbury and Hussein (2008) also highlight the importance of the "power of the messengers" (religious teachers, preachers and militant organisations) in influencing young people to get involved in violent extremism. Again this is an area for further research.

3.4.4 Trigger events

77. There is a limited (but growing) literature analysing *trigger factors such as elections, political events, abuses by security forces, sudden economic crisis, policy changes and personal loss and trauma, which - given a latent situation of conflict and tensions - can activate violence.* In Yemen, youth described abuses by security forces, arbitrary arrests and unfair trials as key triggers for their involvement in violence against the government (EDC, 2008). The violence in Kenya in early 2008 in the aftermath of the elections was certainly symptomatic of a range of underlying tensions and grievances – often very localised in character - but was largely triggered by accusations of vote rigging during the election. Similarly, although carefully prepared over many months, the 1994 genocide was triggered by the shooting down of the President's plane. Ladbury and Hussein (2008) also discuss the importance of trigger events (e.g. events in Palestine and Iraq, the knighthood of Salman Rushdie) in increasing feelings that Islam is being disrespected and mobilising young people into joining extremist groups.

⁵⁴ Bernard (2005) pulls together the articles and results of a conference on youth radicalism in the Middle East and Europe, which focuses primarily on the reasons why young people join radical fringe movements, whether Neo-Nazis in Sweden, Jihadis in Europe and the Iraq insurgency.



78. *Personal loss and trauma can also be significant.* As already discussed, female suicide bombers are often said to be motivated by the loss of close family members. Bloom (2007a and b) also reveals that many of these women have been raped or sexually abused in previous conflicts or by representatives of the state or insurgents themselves. This kind of *trauma-inducing victimisation can be a key recruitment tactic*, as the recently publicised case of Samira Ahmed Jassim in Iraq illustrated (see box 9). Personal losses are also worsened by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which often results in the death of older family or community members who may have provided economic, physical and emotional security for young people and this may leave them susceptible to recruitment into violence.

Box 9: Rape, socialisation, initiation and female suicide bombers in Iraq

The way in which structural and trigger factors and gender norms interact is well illustrated by the recent case of Samira Ahmed Jassim, a woman accused of helping recruiting up to 80 female suicide bombers in Iraq. Also known by Iraqi insurgents as 'Mother of the Believers', the woman has admitted to being a key part of a plot hatched by Ansar Al-Sunnah terrorists, in which young women were raped and then sent to her for motherly advice. In Iraq, raped women are often rejected by their family and despite being victims, are often perceived to bring dishonour. By deliberately isolating the victims from their loved ones through the humiliation of rape, Ms. Jassim has described to the Associated Press and Iraqi police how she would then try to persuade the victims to become suicide bombers as their only escape from the shame and to reclaim their honour. She also described how it was possible to prey on young women with social and economic problems, for example Ms Jassim worked for two weeks to convince a teacher trapped in a bad marriage that suicide was her salvation. Female suicide bombers are increasingly deployed by Al-Qaeda and other insurgent groups in Iraq because they are harder to detect at checkpoints, which are typically manned by male guards who only inspect men. This example also reinforces the point made earlier in this document that female fighters are usually radicalised for more personal, rather than ideological, reasons.

Source: February 2009 – Times, Guardian, New York Times, Huffington Post online

3.5 Resilience: Why some youth don't get involved in violence

79. As discussed above, most studies - especially case study research - focus on the youth that are involved or have been involved in violence (e.g. criminal gangs or ex-youth or child combatants). There has been little attention paid to young people who suffer the same structural conditions of exclusion and blocked transitions to adulthood, but who do not get involved in violence. *How and why do these young people stay out of violence or find ways out? What are the non-violent alternatives that may alleviate the frustrations and disillusionment they feel as a result of their exclusion and lack of opportunities?* Of course, there is always a degree of individual agency and circumstance, but there is some literature that is starting to make arguments about different 'safety valves' and forms of resilience. Far more research is needed in this area, but this section discusses two key ideas in existing literature: (i) That migration can act as a safety valve; and (ii) That social capital is critical to young people's sense of belonging, stability and empowerment.

3.5.1 Migration as a safety valve?

80. *The literature on "youth bulges" considers (voluntary) migration (whether rural – urban or South-North) to be a safety valve for youth discontent.* Urdal (2007: p98) argues that, "If migration opportunities are increasingly restricted without domestic initiatives in place to provide opportunities for youth, developing countries that previously relied on exporting surplus youth may experience increased pressures from youth bulges accompanied by a higher risk of political violence." He cites Moller's (1968) assertion that the possibility for Europe's youth in the 19th century to emigrate to the United States contributed significantly to limiting youth-generated violence in Europe in this period. Indeed, rates of urbanisation are higher than ever in many developing countries and it is estimated



that 60 percent of the world's population will live in cities by 2030, and that as many as 60 percent of urban residents will be under 18 (Ruble et al 2003).

81. There is evidence that *in virtually all conflict and post-conflict settings, young men are more likely to migrate* (compared to women and older men) (Cockburn 1999). Young men aged 15 to 29 are also much more likely to migrate to cities as a reaction to conflict, in search of employment or out of boredom with traditional rural life, increasing the numbers of youth and children on the streets (Ruble et al 2003). Sommers (2007: p8) observes that, "African youth find opportunities for coexistence, reinvention and empowerment in cities. Some male youth use urban migration as a "rite of passage into manhood". In countries with a low proportion of urban residents, such as Rwanda and Burundi, Sommers (2003: p32) argues that rural isolation and fear fuelled ethnic tensions and eventually genocide. By contrast, "cities force people to mix and become familiar with members of groups whose paths might never cross in rural areas. In this sense, cities hold the potential to expand opportunities for peaceful coexistence, at least in some cases". A recent World Bank (2008) study of youth in Burundi found that rural youth generally perceive a stronger decline in their conditions than their urban counterparts and young people (especially male) identify rural-urban migration as a key strategy for enhancing educational, employment and marriage prospects.
82. However, *although migration can be seen as a safety valve, it is often argues that it can also lead to negative outcomes for young people*. Urban youth migration in Africa is widely regarded as overwhelmingly negative, leading to crime, unrest and the spread of HIV/AIDS. In many cases, young men who leave refugee camps to seek better livelihoods in the cities end up separated from their communities and families and often with uncertain prospects, risking further alienation. Urban Africa is regularly depicted as dangerous and veering out of control, as a kind of Darwinian universe where only the fittest survive. Sommers (2003) notes that urban migrant youths in Africa often feel marginalized and alienated from mainstream society, which is ironic, given that they are numerically dominant in a predominantly young and rapidly urbanizing continent and provide an untapped resource. He argues that they are "a majority feeling like a minority" as they are mostly overlooked by the urban elite, policy makers, NGOs and community leaders and the urban programmes they develop.
83. *Some analysts argue that the alienation young migrants – especially recent arrivals – feel in cities can leave them vulnerable to potential recruitment into violence*. For example, Alan Richards (2003) argues that the basic profile of the rank-and-file of violent radical Islamic groups is a young person with some education, who may have recently moved to the city and is somewhat socially disoriented by what they find. Such young people are often unemployed or have jobs well below their expectations and are living in difficult conditions in cities with poor services and utilities. He argues that in many cases, *radical groups have filled the void created by a failing state that young people do not feel represents their interests or can even meet their basic needs for clean water and health care*. In Karachi for example, water, electricity, transport, health and education services are swamped and government incapacity has left a void that private Islamist schools, clinics, hospitals and welfare agencies have filled. Nonetheless, Urdal (2008) finds no correlation between urbanisation rates and levels of political violence; rather he argues, that the significant predictor of urban riots is increasing urban inequality rather than urbanisation *per se*. Overall, the literature on young urban migrants and violence is very limited, and further research is therefore needed into the ways in which migration can act as a safety valve and reduce, rather than exacerbate, the risk of youth violence.

3.5.2 Social capital

84. Researchers are increasingly turning their attention to the idea of "resilience", examining which characteristics of societies, communities and individuals might make them more resistant to violence. A number of analysts *argue that "strong communities" that can*



monitor individual behaviour and bring to bear a variety of social incentives and sanctions are key to limiting participation in violence. Taylor (1998) says that a strong community is defined by: (1) a membership with shared values and beliefs; (2) relations between members which are direct and many sided; and (3) practices within the community of generalized reciprocity. He suggests these characteristics can help understand a community's potential for collective action to prevent violence (but also presumably to support violence where the community is sympathetic to a cause). The WHO (2002) also notes that young people are less likely to display violent behaviour in communities with a high degree of social capital characterised by resilience, integration and trust. The youth and development literature also stresses the importance of decision-making mechanisms that empower young people by giving them voice and allowing them to exercise agency. A variety of different youth voice and empowerment projects have been developed at the community level (see Sommers 2006 for examples), but there is a need to link these to wider governance, decentralisation and voice and accountability programmes.

85. Increasing empirical evidence supports these ideas. Dowdney (2005) conducted interviews in the same community with young people who had joined armed groups and others who had not and found that what separated youth in high-risk environments was their levels of vulnerability and resilience - based upon a combination of access to more options and different types of influences from their communities around them. Peters, Richards and Vlassenroot (2003) give an example from the town of Bo in Sierra Leone where youth-serving organisations were able to keep young men outside RUF activity by recruiting them into civil defence units via football clubs. Cuesta et al. (2007) look at Cali in Columbia, a city with a high degree of youth involvement in criminal gangs, where an innovative public intervention aimed to prevent violence through deliberate social capital formation (see box 10).

Box 10: Building social capital as a violence prevention strategy – the case of Cali in Colombia

Cuesta et al look at DESEPAZ, a comprehensive action plan of social capital formation to reduce crime and violence in Cali, Columbia. It included workshops, family meetings and festivals, as well as greater and more regular interaction with the judiciary system, police, human rights organisations etc, coupled with education, help with housing, training and micro-enterprises. The authors note the following areas of successful positive intervention (in increasing interpersonal trust and reducing victimisation rates): youth education (especially life-skills, citizenship skills); campaigns spreading civic messages; promoting peaceful coexistence; improving the performance of public institutions in the community especially the policy and judiciary system; and interventions supporting community efforts to form associations.

Source: Cuesta, J. et al (2007) Social Capital, Violence and Public Intervention: the Case of Cali

86. UNDP (2006) also note the growing participation of young people in religious movements – especially Islam and Christian Pentecostalism – and that these movements can provide similar functions in society, providing youth with security, moral guidance, education, employment contacts, friendship and alliance networks – in essence, offering survival strategies for increasing numbers of young people as they move away from their families and communities. UNDP particularly notes that some tendencies in Islam (for example, the Hizb ut-Tahrir movement in Central Asia) propose programmes targeting exactly the kind of youth grievances discussed above – in particular education and employment. Equally, the founders of most African Pentecostal movements tend to be women and young men, who have fewer stakes in the social order and are thus willing to challenge social and cultural structures. Pentecostalism can offer young people power, responsibility and “social space” in societies traditionally dominated by elders.
87. In contrast, there is evidence that young people living in environments where the established social order has broken down seem to be more likely to get involved in



violent and criminal activities. For example, a World Bank study on the relation between social capital and crime rates found that the level of trust among community members had a strong effect on the incidence of violent crimes (Lederman et al, 1999).⁵⁵ Case study material has also found a link between youth membership of armed groups and low levels of social capital, although it should also be noted that armed groups may in themselves be a form of social capital for their members. In their study of five poor urban communities in Jamaica, Moser and Holland (1997) found a cyclical relationship between violence and the destruction of social capital.

88. At an individual level, Barker and Ricardo's (2005) work with young men looks specifically at the factors that seem to promote non-violent versions of manhood, which they summarise as:
 - A high degree of self-reflection and space to rehearse new behaviours
 - Having witnessed the impact of violence on their own families and constructed a positive lesson out of these experiences;
 - Tapping into men's sense of responsibility and positive engagement as fathers;
 - Rites of passages and traditions that have served as positive forms of social control and which have incorporated new information and ideals e.g. elders teaching values of responsibility, non-violence, sexual restraint
 - Family members that model more equitable or non-violent behaviours;
 - Employment and school enrolment in some cases – can expose men to alternative forms of conflict resolution and critical thinking and promote long time horizon.
 - Community mobilisation around the vulnerabilities of young men
89. Overall, however, this remains an under-researched area and there is a *need for more work to understand what particular social characteristics distinguish societies and communities that are able to avoid outbreaks of violence, how and why some young men are able to stay out of armed groups, what types of social capital and protective factors can help build young people's resilience to getting involved in armed conflicts, and how these can be developed and supported.*

⁵⁵ Lederman et al.'s (2002) study of 39 countries found that when the index of trust rises by 1%, homicide rates decline by 1.21%. However, the authors themselves note that some of their empirical analysis is lacking in reliability.



4.0 Policies & programmes to address youth exclusion and violence

90. It is beyond the scope of this study to undertake a comprehensive review of existing policies and programming to address youth exclusion and violence. However, this section will summarise some key findings and lessons about possible policy approaches and programming options drawing on interviews with key informants and documentation consulted. It will also discuss the challenges and opportunities for DFID to work in this area, given its current priorities and comparative advantage.

4.1. Policies and approaches to youth and conflict

91. Over recent years, an increasing number of international organisations and bilateral donors have followed the lead of NGO counterparts *in acknowledging the importance of working with youth as beneficiaries, assets and partners*⁵⁶ and have developed policies and programmes in a variety of sectors in conflict-affected areas. The main international organisations working with youth in conflict-affected areas are UNICEF, UNHCR, ILO, WHO and the World Bank. The main bilateral donors seem to be NORAD,⁵⁷ DANIDA,⁵⁸ GTZ and USAID. This section will look briefly at three of these donors – the World Bank, GTZ and USAID – to consider their policies and approaches to working on the linkages between youth, exclusion, violence and conflict. It will also discuss the findings of a UNDP (2006) report on the UN's work in this area.
92. *It is now widely acknowledged in the World Bank that young people are key stakeholders and beneficiary groups and that youth-targeted programming is important.* The Bank has a dedicated Children and Youth Unit in the Human Development Division and a framework for working with youth which focuses on three key areas it considers provide an enabling environment for youth: (i) Policies and institutions which enable children and youth investments to succeed at the sectoral and macro-level; (ii) Families and communities which support, benefit from, own and demand interventions; and (iii) Gender-equitable participation and empowerment of youth and children as agents of their own development. *The Bank has also recently developed a Policy Toolkit for supporting youth at risk in middle-income countries in five key areas:* (i) Youth unemployment, underemployment and lack of formal sector employment; (ii) Early school leaving; (iii) Risky sexual behaviour leading to early childbearing and HIV/AIDS; (iv) Crime and violence; and (v) Substance abuse. It highlights 22 areas that have been effective in addressing these risks around the world (see annex E). Finally, the Bank has also launched a separate web portal 'Youthink'⁵⁹ designed to engage young people in development issues by providing information and inviting their involvement and views.
93. In terms of the Bank's specific approach to youth and violence, a staff member interviewed said that *the Bank is taking a holistic approach to this violence*, covering regular armed conflict, but also endemic lower-level violence, which is a major challenge to development in many countries of Latin America, but also now affecting parts of Africa and Asia. The Bank considers that the focus has been too heavily on small arms and DDR with insufficient focus on underlying issues of youth exclusion. The staff member interviewed considered that *the links between youth exclusion and violence were now widely accepted in the Bank and the focus is now on how to operationalise the approaches outlined above* in its own work as well as engaging in dialogue on these issues with partner governments. The key areas where the Bank is working vary from region to region, but the main approaches are: (i) Integrating youth issues into its Community Driven Development (CDD) programmes either by incorporating specific

⁵⁶ This distinction is made by Maguire (2007) as follows: (i) Youth as beneficiaries – interventions targeted at youth; (ii) youth as partners – working with youth; (iii) youth as assets – work done by youth.

⁵⁷ See Norwegian Ministry Of Foreign Affairs (2005) "THREE BILLION REASONS

⁵⁸ See DANIDA / Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005) *Children And Young People In Danish Development Cooperation*

⁵⁹ <http://www.youthink.worldbank.org/>



components targeting the youth population or by ensuring youth are included in decision-making processes; (ii) Integrating youth issues into key programmes in the areas of employment generation, labour market policy and private sector development – for example youth have been targeted in public works projects; (iii) Integrating youth issues into urban development programme (key approach in Latin America).

94. In 2005, **USAID** produced a “*Toolkit for Intervention*” on youth and conflict, which looks at the reasons why youth engage in violence, lessons learned from working on youth violence and programming options. It emphasises the need to understand and analyse the root causes of root violence in each specific context before attempting to propose solutions. In terms of the lessons learned outlined in the toolkit, these are: (i) Identify, but do not isolate youth at risk; (ii) Build community-based programmes; (iii) Ensure youth ownership and leadership; (iv) Engage female youth; Programme holistically; and (vi) Plan transitions to adult roles for youth (see annex E for details).
95. **GTZ** was one of the first donors to champion work with youth and since 1997, *GTZ has implemented programmes on youth employment, young people’s health, education and training, addressing high-risk behaviour, peace education and crisis prevention training for youth*. Addressing the multiple factors behind youth exclusion and negative socialisation in specific contexts has always been at the heart of GTZ’s programmes. The lead on these issues in the GTZ youth unit reported that GTZ are currently in the process of producing a systematic approach to youth and violence prevention (practice guide should be ready mid-2009). This will cover the following key areas: (i) How to conduct analysis to identify key risk factors/ drivers of youth violence; (ii) Promising approaches and interventions; (ii) How to plan interventions. GTZ is also currently undertaking a systematic evaluation of all its children and youth work focusing on 5 areas: youth violence and conflict; child rights and protection; participation and youth policies; employment promotion; and miscellaneous (due to be completed in June 2009). For many years, GTZ has adopted a systemic and cross-sectoral approach to addressing youth issues, involving both youth and their communities. However, the current drive towards sectoral concentration in each country has led to a recent reduction in specific cross-sectoral youth projects and an increase in programmes where a youth component is integrated into a broader sectoral programme (e.g. governance, education, violence prevention, health promotion), which some in GTZ regret.
96. **Within the UN system**, UNDP (2006) notes that while a number of existing policy instruments directly or indirectly provide guidance on youth and violent conflict, a *coherent or agreed framework for analysing and responding to youth and violent conflict does not exist*. It finds that three relevant policy frameworks exist: (i) The conflict prevention agenda⁶⁰ – which tends to “randomly” refer to youth in analyses of the causes, conditions and dynamics of conflict – focusing particularly on youth as a “threat” and unemployment as the key problem - but fails to unpack the concept of youth; (ii) The youth agenda⁶¹ – which focuses on youth as a discrete group navigating their

⁶⁰ Encapsulated in the framework for collective security defined by the 2004 Report of the Secretary-General’s High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, *A more secure world: Our shared responsibility*.

⁶¹ There is a well-developed UN youth agenda, led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), which houses the UN focal point on youth (see www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/). Known as “Empowering Youth for Development and Peace”, three basic themes are advocated: participation, development and peace. In 1995, the UN also adopted The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, an international blueprint for action revolving around ten priority areas: education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, girls and young women as well as youth participation. It provides a policy framework as well as practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of youth. It focuses, in particular, on measures to strengthen national capacities in the field of youth and to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for full, effective and constructive participation in society. It also underlines the need to scale up investments in youth, to create verifiable indicators for the priority areas and to ensure vulnerable or disadvantaged young people receive special attention. The World Programme outlines the impact of conflict on youth and highlights the role youth should play in peace-building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. It emphasizes, in particular, the role of youth and youth organizations in promoting peace and non-violence as well as in mobilizing youth for post-conflict reconstruction. As UNDP (2006) notes, in this understanding of the relationship between youth and violent conflict, young people are treated as a special target group whose perspectives should be included in



environment and highlights the importance of engaging with youth as partners and beneficiaries. It sees violent conflict or post-conflict situations as key contexts for work with youth, but generally fails to explain the context of violent conflict; and (iii) The development agenda - which is currently driven by the MDGs⁶² and has limitations because it focuses mainly on one particular aspect of the issue (i.e. employment as a solution for a perceived youth crisis).⁶³ UNDP notes that, individually, none of these frameworks is sufficient and therefore of limited help in terms of defining the parameters of the problem, identifying priority areas or defining objectives. UNDP concludes that the UN needs to develop a holistic, comprehensive and systematic framework that captures the complexity of the relationship between youth and violent conflict.

97. Nonetheless, *the United Nations has created a number of legal instruments and adopted several resolutions in an attempt to protect children in situations of armed conflict.* The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC)⁶⁴ was reinforced by the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, adopted by the General Assembly in 2000, and entered into force in 2002. The Optional Protocol states that individuals under the age of 18 should not be forcibly recruited into national armed forces. The Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (the Graça Machel Report, 1996) builds on the principles established by the CRC, documenting the impacts of armed conflict on children and proposing the elements of a comprehensive agenda for action to improve the protection and care of children in conflict situations. On the recommendation of the Graça Machel Report, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict was established in 1997 to draw attention and respond to the plight of children affected by armed conflict - considering key issues affecting children in conflict situations, including child soldiers, girls in war, HIV/AIDS, education, displaced children and sexual violence. Since 1999, the Security Council has also adopted six resolutions on children and armed conflict⁶⁵ and in 2006, the UN published the violence against children study.
98. The experience of other key donors interviewed or examined for this study (e.g. the World Bank, GTZ, USAID) suggests that *a critical first step in addressing the links between youth exclusion and violence is for an organisation to recognise the importance of youth as both partners in and beneficiaries of development and conflict prevention and then to reflect this via a high-level policy statement.* It is then useful to supplement a more general policy on youth and development issues with a specific (policy and/or

processes to prevent or end conflict.

⁶² While some argue that young people are absent from the MDG agenda, others contend that the MDGs implicitly target youth. They are either “directly related to children, the youth of the next generation, or to issues of greater concern to young people, such as maternal health and HIV/AIDS” (World Youth Report 2005). With respect to youth and violent conflict, the MDG framework tends to promulgate an assumption that links youth unemployment and violent conflict, and points to the risk that the lack of productive work makes young people vulnerable to recruitment for violent or illegal activities (UNDP 2006)

⁶³ Under the auspices of the Millennium Declaration, the Youth Employment Network (YEN), a consortium of the ILO, the World Bank and the UN was established to address the global challenge of youth unemployment. YEN emerged from a high-level policy network that set forth five principles, or global priority policy areas: employability, employment creation, equity, entrepreneurship and environmental sustainability. The Youth Employment Network is seen as an instrument for the attainment of one of the targets under the MDGs, but also as a contribution to the attainment of the MDGs as a whole. The YEN advocates for the integration of a youth dimension into all comprehensive employment strategies, strong institutional support for youth employment policies, investment in education, training and life-long learning and youth access to employment services and support.

⁶⁴ The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) seeks to protect children under 18. It legally binds states to its provisions and sets out the rights of children and standards to ensure their well-being in every part of the world, particularly where children are affected by armed conflict, inadequate social conditions, hunger and illiteracy.

⁶⁵ Security Council Resolution 1261 was adopted in 1999 and formally affirmed that the protection and security of children affected by armed conflict is an international peace and security issue, hence falling within the remit of the Security Council. The following year, Resolution 1314 stated that situations of flagrant and widespread violations of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, including that relating to children in situations of armed conflict, may constitute a threat to international peace and security. Resolution 1379, adopted in 2001, addressed additional areas of concern, including the linkage between HIV/AIDS and armed conflict. Other resolutions were adopted in 2003 (1460), 2004 (1539) and 2005 (1612), focusing on the need for implementation of international norms and standards on children and armed conflict.



practice) guide on youth and violence prevention, which addresses the following: (i) The evidence on key drivers of youth engagement in violence and how to analyse these at a country level; (ii) Lessons learned about approaches to address these drivers; and (iii) Guidance on specific programming options. The next section will now look briefly at examples of programming approaches, which help translate policy objectives into specific actions and outcomes at country level.

4.2 Programmes to address youth exclusion and violence

99. The first essential step to determine whether and how to address youth issues in a particular country *is a context-specific analysis of the situation of youth in that country, the challenges and risks they face and the actual and potential impacts of these on achievement of violence prevention and development outcomes*. It is not always necessary for a donor to conduct a new analysis from scratch. In some cases, there will already be existing credible assessments of the situation of youth conducted by others, which can be used or supplemented to gain an understanding of the issues and baseline data. If not, *it is preferable to conduct a joint analysis with other key in-country partners* (national government, other donors, NGOs) to ensure the results of the assessment are owned and disseminated as widely as possible.
100. *In conducting an assessment of youth, it is absolutely essential to involve young people themselves*. Any credible analysis will need to be based on consultations with a cross-section of youth (not just youth leaders, who in some cases may not be representative of the diversity of youth or may enjoy little legitimacy with sections of the youth population)⁶⁶ and key individuals and organisations who work with youth. As far as possible, young people should also be directly involved in leading or conducting the youth assessment (see guidance on conducting youth assessments in forthcoming Youth Participation Guide). For example, DFID Zimbabwe recently engaged two youth consultants to conduct a baseline assessment of the situation of youth (see box 11). A recent extensive baseline study of youth in Yemen commissioned by USAID interviewed a wide range of youth and clearly illustrates the value of such a study in providing baseline data of the situation of youth, the drivers of risky behaviour by youth and options to address this (see annex F).

Box 11: DFID's Zimbabwe's Youth Scoping Study

Against a backdrop of a severe humanitarian and economic crisis with youth unemployment at an estimated 80-90%; high HIV infection rates, especially among young women; the exclusion of youth, particularly young men from many humanitarian programmes targeted at the most vulnerable; and increasing migration of young people to South Africa (often in dangerous conditions) DFID Zimbabwe realised that it was essential to get a clearer picture of the situation faced by Zimbabwe's youth. They therefore commissioned a Youth Scoping Study and hired two young people as the consultants to conduct the study. The study was conducted rapidly in the run up to the March 29th national harmonised elections and, whilst this presented many challenges to the research, it also offered opportunities for greater dialogue as many young people were actively involved in the political campaigning. The study highlighted the extent to which young people feel excluded and marginalised in Zimbabwe. In particular:

- Economic opportunities were extremely limited and young people were increasingly being forced into illegal and negative livelihood strategies such as black market trading, illegal money dealing and transactional sex.
- Growing disenchantment with education. The quality of education in Zimbabwe had been deteriorating and the curriculum was outmoded and didn't meet young people's needs. Educational attainment did not lead to good prospects and employment in Zimbabwe.
- Feelings of hopelessness about the future for Zimbabwe and their own prospects and that better

⁶⁶ It is often noted in the literature that despite the existence of National Youth Councils in many countries, they frequently lack legitimacy among the youth population and are instead viewed as instruments of government, rather than institutions with staff that really represent the interests of youth.



opportunities existed outside the country.

- The serious risks of violent conflict emerging in Zimbabwe. Firstly, via the co-option and manipulation of young men by political parties to commit violence and intimidation. The lack of opportunities was forcing many young men to become involved with quasi-military organisations, such as the Zanu PF youth militias. Secondly, the feelings of hatred and revenge that many young people harboured due to past violence and persecution of certain groups, in particular Operation Restore Order (Murambatsvina) in 2005 when the homes and livelihoods of some 700,000 people were destroyed and the massacre of some 20,000 Ndebele in Matabeleland in the early eighties. The latter was particularly concerning as none of the respondents has been alive during the Matabeleland atrocities.

The study proved to be extremely prescient as within a few weeks' large parts of Zimbabwe were engulfed by a wave of state-sponsored violence and intimidation in the run-up to the June Presidential election. Young people, particularly the youth militia were at the forefront of committing the acts of violence. .

DFID Zimbabwe has therefore decided to strengthen its focus on youth in its programming in a number of ways. DFID Zimbabwe is the only donor to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) nationwide information campaign promoting safe migration. The campaign focuses on young people under 25 and has established youth centres in high sending areas to raise awareness about safe migration, HIV/AIDS and other health issues, provide training, music and arts activities. Secondly, DFID is seeking to strengthen youth programming under the Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP) focused on increasing youth participation and voice (and potentially youth role in reconciliation and peacebuilding), as well as building the capacity of local youth organisations. This would be implemented via an intermediary NGO who would manage a programme of small grants for youth groups and organisations working on priority youth issues. In addition DFID Zimbabwe is exploring how current programmes, such as the Protracted Relief Programme can better involve youth. The Youth Scoping Study has also been very influential in raising the profile of youth issues and youth exclusion amongst other donors and development partners in analysis and preparations for economic stabilisation and recovery and security and justice.

Source: Interview with Philippa Thomas, SDA, DFID Zimbabwe (January 2009)

4.2.1 Key programming options

101. In terms of different programming options with youth, there appear to be three main approaches for donors:

- (i) *Full multi-sectoral youth programmes* which address different issues of concern to youth in a specific context (e.g. GTZ's multi-sectoral strategy in Sierra Leone adopted in 2004 and focused on integrating young people into the labour market and/or their communities – includes capacity building, skills training, income-generating activities, peacebuilding and community empowerment).
- (ii) *Programmes that target youth in a specific sectoral area of activity* such as employment creation, sexual and reproductive health (SRH), HIV-AIDS and DDR. A broad distinction can be made between programmes that aim at violence or conflict prevention ("prevention"), programmes that operate during crisis and conflict ("in conflict"), and specific post-conflict programmes ("post-conflict"), although in many cases approaches might have similar objectives and involve similar activities. Equally, although most programmes address structural factors underlying youth exclusion, many also work on proximate factors. A summary of key programming options is given in box 12 and further details are given in Annex G.
- (iii) *Youth and peacebuilding programmes*: There has been increasing interest in programmes seeking to engage young people directly in democracy and peacebuilding activities as a means to empower youth, to harness their energies and capacities as a force for change and to prevent them from being drawn into renewed violence. Programmes have included peace education, training in rights, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and the direct involvement of youth in elections and human rights monitoring and voice and accountability programmes (see McEvoy-Levy 2006 and Robertson 2008)



- (iv) *More general development programmes where youth are among the beneficiaries and where the programme can be modified and monitored to ensure the desired impacts on youth are achieved. This might involve a specific youth component to the project or measures to ensure that youth are key beneficiaries of activities. In this case, it is absolutely critical for age-disaggregated data to establish baseline indicators on the situation of youth that can then be measured to evaluate the programme's specific impact on youth.*

Box 12: Key programming options to address youth exclusion and violence

Education and skills development

- Delivery of emergency education for war-affected and displaced populations (in conflict)
- Supporting rapid rehabilitation and equipping and staffing of schools (post-conflict)
- Improving equality of access to education (prevention, post-conflict)
- Supporting accelerated “catch-up” programmes (post-conflict)
- Supporting non-formal, vocational and outreach education (prevention, post-conflict)
- Support to secondary and tertiary education
- Work with government to ensure relevance of education (prevention, post-conflict).
- Curricula reform / development and teacher training (prevention, post-conflict).

Employment generation

- Work with governments to promote enabling labour policies (prevention, post-conflict)
- Support equitable job-creation programmes (prevention, post-conflict)
- Private sector development (especially the SME sector) (prevention, post-conflict)
- Support the informal sector as well as the formal economy (prevention, post-conflict)
- Support land reform and rural development programmes (prevention, post-conflict)
- Promote employment-intensive post-war reconstruction (post-conflict)
- Support social protection programmes that include youth (prevention, post-conflict)

Governance, Voice and Accountability

- Promote youth political participation (prevention, in conflict)
- Promote government capacity, accountability and responsiveness (prevention, post-conflict).
- Support implementation of national youth policies (prevention, in conflict).
- Promote accountable security services (prevention, in conflict, post-conflict).
- Support juvenile justice reforms (prevention, in conflict)

DDR programmes

- Target interventions at non-combatants as well as combatants (post-conflict)
- Prioritise flexible, appropriate and long-term reintegration packages (post-conflict)
- Support a wide range of skills training and awareness raising (post-conflict)
- Support community sensitization and benefits programmes (post-conflict)
- Address the special needs of young women (post-conflict)

Youth, peacebuilding and reconciliation

- Support youth peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives (post-conflict)
- Support youth dialogue and peace education (prevention, post-conflict)
- Use media to disseminate messages of violence prevention, tolerance and dialogue (prevention, in conflict, post-conflict)



4.2.2 Lessons learned

102. A number of *key lessons* can be drawn from a brief examination of literature and discussions with key informants on programming related to youth, conflict and violence prevention:

- Programmes must be based on a *comprehensive context-specific analysis of the particular youth population and the particular risk factors*. This analysis should also seek to establish baseline data on the situation of different groups of youth.
- It is *critical that youth are involved in programme design, implementation and evaluation*. Young people often have a clear understanding of their own situation and needs and how these relate to the needs of others.
- It is *mistaken to assume that general development programmes will automatically benefit youth* in contexts where the youth population is high. Indeed, the evidence suggests that like women, youth are often excluded from development programmes worsening their situation. It is essential to build in specific measures to ensure that general/ programme reach youth, especially the poorest and those most susceptible to involvement in violence.
- It is *possible to address both structural and proximate factors* leading to youth exclusion and violence through programming. Development programmes often primarily focus on the former (e.g. via employment generation, improving education provision and quality), assuming the latter are related to the decisions of individuals and cannot be addressed. However, some proximate factors can be addressed (e.g. support to tolerant media, promotion of dialogue counter radical messages and propaganda, peacebuilding projects)
- It is *important to work on violence prevention at the local/community and the national level and to create linkages between these levels*. Problems of sustainability, scale-up and high transaction costs have led some donors to reduce funding to community-level approaches to violence prevention etc. Early assessments suggest, however, that such approaches do have an impact in tackling violence and exclusion at a local level and complement larger-scale national efforts to address unemployment, poor political participation etc. Community-level approaches should be supported and creative ways found to promote sustainability and scale-up and reduce transaction costs. Equally, there is a need to look more creatively at broader governance and voice and accountability work to see how reforms can purposively create spaces for young men and women to engage in dialogue with each other and the authorities.
- *Multi- or cross-sectoral programming can often be an effective way of achieving impact* e.g. integrate peace education and health education into school curricula; combine sports and recreation programmes with conflict resolution training.⁶⁷
- There is a need for *new and creative programming in some areas, which remain largely unaddressed* by donors, governments and NGOs. These include programmes that can prevent and respond to factors such as mobilisation on the basis of ideology/values and identity and that can tackle problems of socialisation into violence. This is an area where a cross-fertilisation of ideas between developed and developing countries would be useful.
- It is *important to focus on both non-combatant and combatant youth* (i.e. not only those involved in or susceptible to return to violence)– especially war-affected and displaced young people – to ensure interventions address all vulnerable young people and create positive interaction and integration rather than tensions.

⁶⁷ For example, early evidence suggests that “community security” approaches in favelas in Brazil, which have integrated legal reform, police reform, service delivery, alternative dispute resolution etc – are enjoying some success in terms of violence prevention.



- *Girls and young women are still under-represented in policy and programmes.* In a recent document on gender and conflict, Plan (2008: 24) has warned that girls and young women “risk falling between the cracks as programmes target children but do not take account of the differences between girls and boys, or target women but fail to make provision for the different needs of older women and younger girls”.
- *Disaggregation of data by age and gender* is essential to provide evidence on whether and how young males and females benefit from a particular intervention.
- Working on these issues is inherently risky so *risk assessment and management* (not avoidance) should be a key component of any programming in this area.
- Although there is some evidence of positive outcomes of programmes – especially community level programmes - *information on impacts remains limited* and there is a need to conduct more systematic evaluations on what works and why.

4.3 Implications for DFID

103. As found in the Youth Mapping Study (Maguire, 2007), interviews conducted with DFID staff in country offices and headquarters during this study suggest significant interest in youth issues and *an awareness that DFID and its partners need to integrate youth issues more thoroughly into its work* in order to make better progress on both poverty reduction and conflict prevention outcomes. Some country staff interviewed felt that addressing issues of youth exclusion were a top priority and have already developed a number of programming approaches to integrate youth issues or work with youth directly – for example in DFID Zimbabwe (see box 11 above), DFID Sierra Leone and DFID Uganda (see box 13).

Box 13: How to integrate youth issues into DFID programmes

DFID Uganda: Uganda has a history of conflict, and is one of the most youthful and fastest growing populations in the world, particularly in urban areas, raising concerns about future employment prospects and possible political manipulation and ethnic mobilisation of youth. The Ugandan government is aware of the need to address the needs of youth, especially employment generation and skills development, and DFID Uganda is now considering how to work with youth more effectively. For example, in the design of a new programme for the North, a key issue is how to work with young people - especially ex-combatants and displaced youth who may not want to go back to village life. Equally, DFID Uganda is planning a new gender programme, which will particularly look at the challenges faced by young women in terms of access to economic opportunities and sexual exploitation. Finally, DFID Uganda has made a contribution of £1m into a DDR programme through a multi-donor trust fund. The DDR programme has been designed in a way that will specifically address youth and gender issues.

DFID Sierra Leone: Youth exclusion is widely acknowledged to be among the key drivers of the conflict and violence in Sierra Leone. There continue to be concerns about intergenerational conflict, high levels of youth unemployment, the lack of opportunities in secondary and vocational education, the continued marginalisation of youth from decision making, growing rural-urban migration, the potential radicalisation of young Muslims and growing involvement of West Africa in the international drugs trade. A number of donors are already working with or on youth in Sierra Leone (e.g. GTZ funding public works / food for work programme; SIDA funding major vocational education programme) and DFID Sierra Leone is increasingly integrating youth issues into existing programmes. For example, DFID Sierra Leone is supporting the UNDP's peacebuilding fund, which includes a component on youth employment. DFID also has a major civil society and deepening democracy programme (NSIS) and is encouraging the integration of a youth perspective and youth participation. The Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF) also includes projects working with youth via the media and sport and DFID is funding a number of NGOs who are targeting youth (e.g. SPW via HIV/AIDS information work, and through ENCISS, a CARE managed project which integrates activities on youth training / empowerment).

Sources: Interviews with Joanne Bosworth, DFID Uganda, Helen Appleton, DFID Sierra Leone (Jan 2009)



104. Most country staff interviewed felt, however, that it would be *useful to have more specific analysis about the situation of youth in their countries and the potential risk factors. Equally, they thought it would be useful to have more information about specific approaches to working more effectively with youth in order to promote poverty reduction and violence prevention.* However, some concerns were raised about yet another “mainstreaming” agenda in DFID. There have clearly been mixed results of mainstreaming issues in the past and country offices have often felt bombarded by new centrally-driven initiatives and requirements. As has been demonstrated in countless cases in the past (e.g. gender, environment, drivers of change, statebuilding, etc), a number of components are required in order to make progress: (i) high-level and public policy commitments; (ii) senior leadership in DFID; (iii) allocation of resources to these issues at a central and country programme level.
105. In the case of preventing youth exclusion and violence, it is likely that a *“toolkit” approach might be more helpful.* DFID (Equity and Rights Team) have already commissioned a Youth Participation Guide, which will include the following: (i) Present a rationale for working with and for youth; (ii) Present a series of generic and thematically-based resources (literature, tools, programme approaches) and case studies on youth policy and programming. *The best approach may therefore be to include within or as an annex to the guide, sections on “youth and violence prevention”.* These would summarise the following:
- The evidence on key drivers of youth engagement in violence, when and why country offices should be concerned about youth exclusion;
 - How to conduct a country-level assessment of the situation of youth and potential risks of involvement in violence;
 - Lessons learned about approaches and priorities to address these drivers and risks;
 - Guidance on specific programming options.
106. In terms of *DFID’s programming approach in specific country contexts*, this will be determined by a number of factors: (i) What country-level analysis says about the levels of youth exclusion and risks of youth involvement in violence; (ii) DFID’s country programme objectives; (iii) DFID’s comparative advantage in this area; (iv) What others (donors, government, NGOs) are already doing in this area and what the gaps are; (v) Evidence on effective programming approaches. As discussed above, a useful first step in decision-making at country level is to examine or commission analysis about the situation of youth, the risks they face and potential to contribute positively to poverty and violence reduction. This might be supplemented by a country-level mapping of whether and how well youth issues are already being addressed by the partner government, other donors, and NGOs.

4.3.1 Opportunities and entry points

107. In terms of the *key opportunities and entry-points for DFID to work on youth exclusion and violence issues*, these can be summarised as follows:
- Recent debates suggest that *DFID will focus on statebuilding and peacebuilding objectives as immediate priorities in conflict-affected and fragile contexts* with MDGs as the longer-term goals. Given that youth exclusion is a key driver of violence and fragility in some contexts, this provides an opportunity for DFID to address youth exclusion and youth at risk of involvement in violence through country programming in these contexts.
 - *DFID’s strong relationships with many partner governments (often underpinned by budgetary support) should give DFID influence in ensuring partner countries address youth issues* – in particular that they collect data on the situation of youth, design and resource policies and programmes to address youth needs and build on the potential of young people to contribute.



- *Sector-wide approaches (e.g. health, education, Security Sector Reform (SSR)) are key opportunities to ensure that youth issues are adequately assessed and addressed* and cross-sectoral linkages made where possible. This may involve encouraging the incorporation of a specific youth component or policies or earmarking resources to target particular groups of youth. Again the critical element will be to obtain age- as well as gender-disaggregated data so actual impacts on youth can be measured rather than assumed.
- *DFID's strong focus on gender in its policies and programmes provides an opportunity to recognise the gender-specific needs and realities of men and promote strategies for their meaningful involvement in achieving gender equality, reducing poverty and violence.*
- *DFID's growing portfolio of work on promoting growth* provides a key opportunity to ensure this growth is inclusive and both build on and generates employment opportunities for young people (see details in parallel DFID report of youth, inclusive growth and jobs).
- *DFID's civil society fund mechanisms* provides an opportunity to find smaller-scale, community-based initiatives to address youth exclusion and violence.
- *DFID's support to national statistics offices* is a key opportunity to ensure that age- and gender-disaggregated data is collected and analysed.
- *DFID's recent work on radicalisation* has stressed the importance of issues of identity, values and beliefs in motivating people's actions including mobilisation into violence. With a strong cadre of Social Development Advisers and large research budget, DFID would be well-placed to fund research and improve the knowledge based in this important under-researched area.

4.3.2 Challenges

108. In terms of the *key challenges for DFID in addressing youth exclusion and violence issues*, these can be summarised as:

- *DFID has moved away from funding local-level projects and community-based initiatives*, although the evidence suggest that youth exclusion and violence issues must be addressed at both the national and local/community level and that both structural and proximate factors must be addressed. Therefore DFID needs to work with others to ensure that well-designed community-based initiatives do take place – this may involve encouraging other partners with expertise in this area (e.g. GTZ) or in some cases, providing funding for such initiative via an intermediary (other donor or INGO) and some form of civil society fund.
- In many cases, *partner governments in fragile and conflict-affected countries may be unwilling to have a dialogue about youth issues* or engage in this domain in spite of evidence that suggests that youth exclusion is increasing the risks of violence. Issues of exclusion can be politically sensitive, especially when that exclusion is based on identity – especially ethnicity, religion, geography or age. Some governments may fear youth and others may use and exploit use, for example by hiring them as political thugs or militia. Other governments find it convenient simply to ignore youth.
- Alternatively in spite of the existence of a youth policy, youth council, youth MPs etc *the government may in practice implement policies that are detrimental rather than beneficial to youth*⁶⁸ or indeed be a party to conflict or security forces abuses involving youth. DFID will therefore need to consider whether and how to work in these contexts as the risks of ignoring youth needs and grievances may be high.

⁶⁸ e.g. legislation on housing in Rwanda which undermines young people's ability to afford a house and achieve adulthood; new license fee for motorbikes in Sierra Leone, which bike riders are being asked to pay and threatens to undermine a very successful DFID-funded bike riding scheme.



Alternatives such as working on these issues via NGOs and other non-state actors may be required.

- There are particular challenges in many conflict-affected and fragile states where there are *significant areas of territory or neighbourhoods outside the reach of the state*, where non-state actors (traditional authorities, gangs, armed militias etc) may be far more significant in the lives of young people. Again it may be dangerous to ignore or excluded these areas and population in interventions and DFID will need to look carefully at options.
- *Working on issues of youth violence may be sensitive and risky* and DFID will need to put in place robust mechanisms to assess and manage risks.
- *A widespread lack of data about the situation of youth and lack of age-disaggregated data*, which makes assessment of whether and how different groups of youth are benefiting from particular programmes difficult.

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

Youth exclusion and violence: issues and evidence

109. Key findings and conclusions are:

- There is *statistical evidence of a link between high relative youth populations and an increased risk of armed conflict*. Structural models which forecast these risks combined with early-warning systems that monitor known trigger factors (such as youth unemployment and educational reversals) can therefore help identify countries with higher and lower risks of violence.
- *However, such statistical relationships have their limitations*. They cannot be used as a sole predictor of conflict in specific areas and reveal little about the causal processes at work.
- *It is important that youth are not generally viewed as a security “threat”*. The majority of young people do not get involved in violence and governments need to acknowledge the huge potential of youth to contribute to peacebuilding and development and promote policies of inclusion and development rather than containment.
- It is a mistake to assume all combatants are young men - *women make up to 10% of armed forces and up to 40% of armed groups worldwide* and take on a variety of non-military support roles.
- A key factor driving youth involvement in violence is *the structural exclusion and lack of opportunities faced by young people, which block or prolong their transition to adulthood and can lead to frustration, disillusionment and, in some cases, their participation in violence*.
- The principle “structural” factors that underlie youth exclusion are: (a) un- and underemployment and lack of livelihood opportunities; (b) insufficient, unequal and inappropriate education and skills; (c) poor governance and weak political participation; (d) gender inequalities and socialisation; (e) a legacy of past violence.
- *Nonetheless, structural factors alone are usually insufficient to explain outbreaks of violence, as many societies and groups suffer exclusion, but violence is absent*. In this respect, in the context of structural exclusion, a number of “proximate” factors appear to be important in mobilising specific individuals and groups into violence: (a) Recruitment, coercion and indoctrination; (b) Identity politics and ideology; (c) Leadership and organisational dynamics; (d) Trigger events.
- Furthermore, in any specific country or regional context, *large numbers of youth often suffer the same conditions of exclusion, but most of them do not get involved in*



violence. This area is under-researched, but factors that might foster resilience and prevent the mobilisation of young people into violence are: (a) *migration opportunities as a safety valve for frustrated young people*; (b) *“strong communities” and associational life that build young people’s social capital, belonging and sense of empowerment*.

110. Areas recommended for further research are:

- At a country-level, context-specific assessments of the situation of youth and particular risk factors are needed.
- The linkages between different forms of violence (e.g. political, criminal, ethnic), whether there are any differences in the processes by which young people get involved and whether they move from one group to the other.
- Proximate factors such as the role of leadership and organisational dynamics, the role of identity politics, ideas, values and beliefs, and trigger events in mobilising individual and groups of youth into violence – and how these might be addressed.
- The social characteristics of societies and communities that avoid major outbreaks of violence.
- More systematic studies of individual motivations for engagement in violence including specific studies of the motivations, role, experiences and consequences of young women’s involvement in violence.
- The factors that prevent some excluded young people from getting involved in violence. How do they resist? What non-violent alternatives do they find?
- How can resilience to violence be built at a community level and what community processes and mechanisms protect young people from becoming involved in violent groups.
- The relationship between migration opportunities, including rural-urban migration, and youth violence.

Recommendations for DFID policies and programmes

111. Key policy-level recommendations include:

- Do not employ a security framework towards youth, which risks alienating them further; instead seek to understand their perspectives and the positive role they can play in poverty reduction and violence prevention.
- Look at youth-led violence holistically, rather than engaging in separate work on violent conflict, armed violence, sexual and gender-based violence etc.
- Prioritise ‘youth bulge’ countries and countries with high levels of youth involvement in violence for DFID work to address youth exclusion.
- Develop a guidance note on “youth and violence prevention” to accompany youth participation guide, which sets out: (a) the evidence on key drivers of youth engagement in violence, when and why country offices should be concerned about youth exclusion; (b) How to conduct a country-level assessment of the situation of youth and potential risks of involvement in violence; (c) Lessons learned about approaches and priorities to address these drivers and risks; and (d) Guidance on specific programming options.
- Consider commissioning a fuller review (preferably jointly with other donors or via the DAC) on donor policies and programming on youth and violence prevention.

112. Key programme-level recommendations include:



- Undertake context-specific analysis of the situation of youth and key risk factors that could lead to their mobilisation in violence and integrate this analysis into country programming decisions and existing country priorities.
- Where possible, involve young people in analysis and programming; engage youth positively as assets, partners and beneficiaries; understand their perspectives.
- Do not assume youth will automatically benefit from general development programmes; instead consider building in specific youth components; earmarking resources for youth; targeting specific interventions at youth etc.
- Look for opportunities to address youth exclusion issues via existing programmes e.g. promoting the political participation of youth in 'deepening democracy' programmes; ensuring micro-credit programmes target youth
- If there is insufficient work at community-level to address problems of youth exclusion and violence, consider funding initiatives via an intermediary or civil-society fund mechanism or influencing others to do so.
- Ensure collection of age-disaggregated data, which can be used to inform programme design and evaluate impacts on youth. To the extent possible, such data should be collected and disseminated in a way that facilitates cross-context comparison.
- Support National Youth policies in partner countries, but ensure they are backed by political will, properly connected to other sectoral areas, properly resourced and actually implemented.
- Where appropriate, conduct evaluations of the way DFID's work has impacted on the situation of youth.
- Be prepared to programme in a flexible and experimental way, as this is new territory!

