



Service as a Strategy

A Visionary Strategy for Post-Conflict Recovery

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Special Thanks to Richard Curtain and Tareq Bakri for their contributions and guidance

September 2007



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Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) is a non-profit social change organization that supports the development of innovative, high-quality youth civic engagement policies and programs both in the US and around the world. Founded in 2001, ICP is dedicated to creating opportunities for young people to change their communities for the better and build essential skills for future success. Funded through a multi-year grant from the Ford Foundation, we partner with individuals and organizations around the globe to stimulate innovation around two civic engagement strategies: national youth service and service-learning. At ICP, we believe that well-structured youth service programs can provide innovative solutions to social and environmental issues, while helping young people develop skills for future employment and active citizenship. For more information, visit www.icicp.org.

Introduction

Violent conflict leaves behind a generation of young people who are capable yet misunderstood and undervalued by their societies.¹ These young people become both victims and perpetrators of violence during conflict, forced to demonstrate extraordinary resilience and resourcefulness to survive.² Whether through military activity or as heads of households, many young people find themselves in positions of authority, leadership, and responsibility that they would not have had during peacetime. However, once immediate rehabilitation needs are met after conflict, these youth tend to be marginalized in societies that perceive them as a threatening force or as traumatized victims rendered incapable of positive social contribution. Excluded from peacebuilding activities and faced with a lack of opportunities in education and employment, young people find themselves overlooked as potential agents for post-conflict recovery.

In recent years, the neglect of youth as a resource in post-conflict situations has become the center of much global discourse. A growing number of international actors realize that post-conflict programs for youth must go beyond humanitarian measures that target them as beneficiaries. Young people have a right and a responsibility to become active participants in the rebuilding of their communities. According to political scientist and conflict expert Siobhán McEvoy-Levy, “the lesson in terms of peace building with and for youth in postaccord situations is that the development of opportunities for work and meaningful political and/or community-building activity must be a priority.”³ Youth in post-conflict situations need structured opportunities that allow them to bring about positive social change.

This paper calls upon local, national, and international NGOs, as well as country governments and international agencies to invest in youth service as a strategy for engaging young people as participants in post-conflict recovery. It begins by situating youth in the context of violent conflict and highlighting the challenges they face and the unique needs that rise from their circumstances. The following section explains the potential benefits to incorporating youth service programs into post-conflict reconstruction, particularly in areas such as peacebuilding, community development, and social integration. Subsequently, the authors provide a review of several programs in the field that engage youth in post-

conflict situations. The paper concludes with a discussion of challenges to youth service programs and general recommendations for engaging youth to advance post-conflict recovery.

Youth in Situations of Violent Conflict

Individuals aged 10 to 24 years old constitute the majority of armed soldiers in developing countries.⁴ An estimated 300,000 child soldiers participate in armed groups at any given time, and countless girls are coerced into sexual slavery or forced marriage.⁵ Youth may experience conflict as laborers in military camps, civilians living amidst violence, refugees, or internally displaced persons who no longer have the safety of a home. Yet conflict affects all youth regardless of the roles they play during violence. The destruction of infrastructure and loss of support systems often leave youth without adequate education or healthcare, while the social, economic, and political upheaval exacerbates threats of poverty.

Despite vast differences in experiences during conflict, the international community and country governments have tended to stereotype youth as either victims or perpetrators of violence. This stereotyping of young people during conflict tends to lead to their exclusion from the design and implementation of reconstruction efforts once a conflict has ended. Young people find few or no opportunities for meaningful participation in societies that believe they “lack the ability to make decisions about the future” due to lingering trauma, or consider them “incapable or morally unworthy of positive contribution” due to their “destructive psychosis” as combatants.⁶ This stereotyping occurs partially as a result of recent discourse on the use of child soldiers, the exploitation of women and girls, and debate over the correlation

between youth bulges and violent conflict.⁷ Research on child soldiers and gender-based violence tends to stimulate responses of protective humanitarian programs for younger children and female

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youth, while the youth bulge hypothesis tends to depict large populations of older youth—especially young males—as potential determinants of conflict, which leads to them being seen as problems rather than as agents for social reconstruction.⁸

Youth in post-conflict situations require programs that provide a protective environment for recovery and address basic needs that rise from their varied experiences during conflict. However, as young people making a dual transition from conflict to peace and from childhood to adulthood, youth also require opportunities to gain a positive role and identity in their society.⁹ Social and economic constraints in post-conflict settings often make it difficult for youth to gain positions of responsibility, causing a “youth crisis” in which their transition to adulthood is blocked.¹⁰ The failure to incorporate young people into national reconstruction also creates problems of disaffection, which may lead to various forms of destructive self-interest (whether corruption or violence) as youth are left to fend for themselves. It is critical that programs recognize not only the diversity of difficulties experienced by young people in post-conflict communities, but also the contributions they can make to reconstruction efforts and provide opportunities for young people to participate in peacebuilding, development, and reconstruction efforts.

Service as a Strategy for Engaging Youth in Post-Conflict Situations

In recent years, the international community has begun to expound the need for rights-based, multi-sectoral programming for youth in post-conflict settings. The issue of fulfilling young people’s right to social participation has drawn increasing attention in the international arena, as has the search for holistic approaches to youth participation in post-conflict situations that cut across traditional areas of programming such as demobilization and reintegration, education, and employment.¹¹ There is also a growing recognition in the international community that the endurance of a peace agreement depends on the next generation’s ownership of the peace process, which must include opportunities for youth to take on roles of responsibility and guardianship.¹² The challenge remains to design a new frame-

work for youth programming that allows for such participation in post-conflict recovery while also addressing personal and community development needs. Youth civic service programs have the potential to address these needs by providing a participatory, cross-sectoral framework for engaging youth in post-conflict recovery.

Youth service is defined by the Global Service Institute as “an organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national, or world community, recognized and valued by society, with minimal monetary compensation to the participant.”¹³ Youth service programs can be national in scope or community-based.

Additionally, youth service can range from one-time episodic community service to long-term service-learning projects. Within the diversity of program designs, it is important that any type of program be tailored to the specific circumstances of a community

and designed to include the needs and resources present in that community. Keeping in mind this need for adaptation, there are a number of advantageous aspects of youth service that make it a particularly appropriate strategy for engaging youth in post-conflict situations.

By definition, youth service programs engage youth directly in meeting critical needs in their community, providing the much needed opportunity for positive social participation. Instead of perpetuating the separation between benefactors and beneficiaries of programs (which had been criticized by organizations such as the Women’s Commission for Refugee and Children as causing further marginalization of youth), youth service programs allow for collaboration between youth and adult members of society.¹⁴ When implemented correctly, organized systems of training and supervision allow for a protective environment for youth without obstructing their status as full partners. Youth service also allows young people the opportunity to reflect on their role in society and how their service is relevant to the overall political, social, and economic situation. Service-learning provides youth the opportunity to see the relevance and impact of their work. It also allows youth to explore how they personally are going to benefit from engaging in service in the long term.

Well-designed youth service programs also

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allow for inclusive, collective activity that transcends traditional social and political divides, particularly those caused by ethnic and religious differences as well as economic inequalities. Traditional areas of youth programming such as demobilization and reintegration for youth soldiers as well as psychosocial counseling for victims of exploitation often exclude a greater population of youth who have survived the conflict. Although reintegration programs are vital for youth soldiers, the number of ex-combatants is relatively small in proportion to the broader, general youth population, which also needs assistance in making the transition to peacetime. Reintegration programs also focus mostly on male ex-combatants, despite the large number of female youth who become involved in armed groups in various capacities.¹⁵ A service program would be able to engage a broad population of youth, avoiding gender imbalances, and selected inclusion of more targeted programming.

The cross-sectoral nature of service also makes it an appropriate strategy in post-conflict situations. International agencies such as the World Bank and UNDP have emphasized the need for a multisectoral framework for youth programming while highlighting emerging lessons from desk and field research.¹⁶ Traditional areas of programming such as peacebuilding, education and employment often overlap and become most relevant when they do overlap (addressing peacebuilding issues in formal and non-formal education, skills training and job experience through involvement in community development). Youth service programs allow for such integration of programmatic areas, providing an alternative to youth interventions of the past that had addressed post-conflict issues separately.

Contributions of Youth Service in Post-Conflict Recovery

Youth service programs have the potential to provide long-lasting benefits to individuals and communities. Individual youth participants may benefit from the development of personal, social, and vocational skills. Communities benefit from the services performed by these participants, whether it is the repair of infrastructure or awareness campaigns for HIV/AIDS. This section highlights the main ways in which these mutually beneficial relations provide a strong case for incorporating youth service in post-conflict settings.

Education is one of the major interventions that youth are particularly suited to both provide and receive through service programs. According to the 2006 UN report “Children and Armed Conflict,” a growing concern in conflict and post-conflict situations is the increased attacks against schools, included but not limited to the “burning or bombing of schools, the assassination of principals, teachers, and officials” or the “forced occupation of schools.”¹⁷ Such loss of facilities, materials, and teachers erodes education and training systems that allow youth to develop skills and knowledge. Youth service participants may work as peer educators concerning matters of health care or serve as mentors or tutors for younger children in communities that lack teachers. Service programs also fill the gap in education by providing opportunities for informal education, personal and social skills development, as well as vocational training for youth participants.

Engaging in peacebuilding and community re-development activities in partnership with other youth, community members, or civil society organizations helps youth service participants develop inter-personal skills, self-confidence, and a sense of affiliation and commitment to their society. In addition to technical skills that may transfer to jobs, service participants also gain “soft skills” valued by employers, which include qualities such as leadership, responsibility, the ability to take supervision, decision-making skills, self-management, team-building, and cooperation. Service may also expose young people to domains they have not experienced before. Through service, young people have the opportunity to explore new ideas, roles, and vocations within themselves and the surrounding. This process helps young people better understand themselves and the world around them, as well as to define a civic role for themselves in the new post-conflict environment.

On a communal or societal level, youth service programs have the potential to contribute to

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post-conflict peacebuilding by fostering trust and rebuilding identities based on constructive activity instead of violence. In recent years, approaches to peacebuilding have shifted towards conflict resolution techniques that “address the underlying causes of conflict and mend the social fabric of conflict-affected societies.”¹⁸ Service programs advance this social mending as youth participants work as partners in post-conflict recovery processes. Service activities help foster communal identity among youth who were separated by ethnic, religious, social, economical, or political divides during conflict. The fostering of trust, change of attitude, and creation of new identities also occurs between youth and other members of society as youth become a demonstrated community asset through their engagement in service.¹⁹

The following section describes specific cases of programs that have begun to work in the area of youth service from which key lessons can be drawn. These case studies provide examples of ways in which youth service has been used to rebuild communities and infrastructure in post-conflict society. More research is required to measure the impact of these programs, however based on preliminary evaluations and assessments, these programs have been shown to have a positive effect on the young people who are engaged in service as well as on the communities they are serving.

Case Studies of Youth Service in Post-Conflict Reconstruction

Youth service has been used in a number of post-conflict situations to address critical national needs during reconstruction. In each of the examples below, service programs were tailored to address specific issues and areas of need that arise from each unique conflict: from peacebuilding, development, and repair of infrastructure, promotion of democracy, to HIV/AIDS education, and generation of economic opportunity. Often, programs incorporate reconciliation and peacebuilding goals within broader aims of developing human and social capital and physical infrastructure. Other programs have a more narrow focus on meeting specific community needs within a conflict or post-conflict context. The following case

studies from Angola, the Balkans, Burundi, and Sierra Leone illustrate the diverse yet pivotal role youth service can play during post-conflict reconstruction.

Angola

Angola’s 27-year civil war came to an end in 2002, ushering in a new era of openness and cross-border mobility. Previously, because the country was closed off from its neighbors and travel was made impossible due to widespread violence, the HIV/AIDS rate was extremely low compared to its southern Africa neighbors. The reemergence of cross-border travel has brought new economic opportunities, but also dramatically increased the HIV/AIDS infection rate. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, nearly 4% of Angolans are now infected with the virus. Because of the protracted and bloody civil war, Angola lacks the educational and healthcare infrastructure necessary to fight the pandemic. HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness campaigns are important to the rebuilding of Angola. UNICEF suggests that

Potential Areas of Work for Youth Service

- HIV/AIDS education & outreach
- Environmental restoration
- Assistance in primary education
- Community development
- Repair of housing & infrastructure

HIV/AIDS could be the biggest challenge to recovery; an increase in infection rates could strain a fragile health care system, and the loss of wage earners has the potential to economically devastate families.²⁰ Addressing HIV/AIDS before the disease is widely spread is an important step in developing post-conflict Angola.

Prazedor—a combination of the words “pleasure” and “pain” in Portuguese—was founded by young Angolans in 1997 to boost awareness about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) through the work of youth volunteers. It has since become the most active and professional organization focused on HIV/AIDS and other STIs in Angola. Prazedor has worked closely with UNICEF on advocacy and awareness campaigns and mentors new organizations on best practices.

Prazedor volunteers perform outreach at locations frequented by those most at risk, such as truckers, prostitutes, and marketplace vendors, as well as in established health centers in the southeastern Hulia province. The volunteers’ most innovative work, however, is carried out at Angola’s ubiquitous

roadblocks; young volunteers station themselves at the checkpoints that dot the nation's roadways, bounding up to stopped cars to hand out literature and condoms in an effort to reach as many people as possible in a country where one-third have never heard of these rapidly spreading diseases.

With 70% of the country under the age of 24, Prazedor's small contingent of youth volunteers serve to break down barriers to discussing STIs. In addition, the majority of Prazedor's volunteers are female, providing young women with new roles in a society struggling to find its way after nearly three decades of conflict. This example illustrates how youth service can be used on a small scale in post-conflict environments to make an impact at the local level. More research is required to evaluate the long-term effects of the program as well as its scalability. The major benefit of this type of program, however, is its ability to mobilize youth with a small amount of resources to provide a service that would otherwise be too expensive or difficult to coordinate.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkans

After the former Yugoslavia dissolved in the early 1990s, the newly independent Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina descended into a brutal three-way civil war among the major ethnic groups: Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians. When the fighting ended in 1995, Bosnia was a deeply divided society, with a lack of trust among its citizens and a broken economy. As the rest of Central and Eastern Europe rushed to join prosperous Western Europe through increased trade and building new diplomatic relationships, Bosnia and Herzegovina has struggled to rebuild its infrastructure, halt the exodus of people to more prosperous regions of Europe, and create and strengthen bonds among different ethnic groups.

In the context of a crippled national infrastructure, continuing ethnic tensions, and youth alienation, service is helping to catalyze positive changes. Through OSMIJEH (the Association for Psychosocial Help and Development of Voluntary Work),²¹ over 6,000 youth from different ethnic groups, have worked side-by-side with refugees and other displaced people. The driving philosophy of OSMIJEH is "empowerment through voluntary work." By reconstructing rural villages, young volunteers are addressing Bosnia's most critical post-conflict infrastructure and community development needs. They tutor in elementary schools and youth

centers, help care for disabled children and isolated elderly people, run community radio programs, and provide counseling.

Through increased interaction with other ethnic groups in structured programming, these young men and women foster bonds of trust and help break down social barriers. Volunteers develop new skills, learn about the functioning of various institutions, and are sensitized to the needs of other communities. Perhaps most important, service programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina help combat feelings of hopelessness by providing young people with opportunities to become actively involved in the rebuilding of their country. By feeling they can contribute, young people are empowered to do more, growing into responsible citizens capable of addressing the lasting effects of conflict on their communities.

Burundi

Guided by the "Three R's" of Rebuilding Homes, Rebuilding Hearts, and Reconciliation, Jeunesse en Reconstruction du Monde en Destruction (Youth in Reconstruction of the World in Destruction, or JRMD), a non-sectarian Christian organization, has worked in Burundi since 2004.²² A civil war between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups raged for a dozen years and cost more than 200,000 people their lives. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of Burundians fled from their homes and many of them spent years living in refugee camps. Central to JRMD's mission is the reconstruction of homes. Without a permanent place for citizens to live, it is impossible to promote education, healthcare, and peace. Since 2004, 557 homes have been built or reconstructed for over 2,000 survivors in an effort to create more stable communities.

As Burundi emerges from this dark period in its history, JRMD, a non-governmental organization dependent entirely on private donations, is mobilizing the nation's youth in achieving the "Three

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R's" by supporting development and reconciliation programs. Central to JRMD's success is its commitment to reviving and embracing pre-colonial methods of conflict resolution. These time-honored techniques begin with healing conflict within the family and gradually expanding outward to the community and nation.

JRMD involves youth in several ways. The first is as members of a National Volunteer Team, which travels around Burundi leading efforts in reconstruction of homes, villages and infrastructure and educating others about peace-building, non-violence, and injustice. These teams of diverse groups of young people who travel and live together provide a positive example of ethnic reconciliation and forgiveness for the communities they serve. JRMD volunteers are typically high school and college-aged youth and represent all of Burundi's ethnic groups. Youth serve as long as they are able to, with most spending one year with the organization. While serving with JRMD, volunteers receive room and board, and associated expenses are covered. To build a house that accommodates 7 to 10 people costs \$987, and a latrine costs \$85. These funds are raised through individual private donations, foundations, and international organizations.

National Volunteer Teams also start projects in tandem with youth in the villages they visit. These projects teach them life and professional skills, such as learning carpentry by rebuilding a house, or introducing sustainable poultry farming. Youth action teams also encourage reconciliation and foster peace building through arts, music, and sports programs for Burundian youth. The work of JRMD is an excellent example of how NGOs can mobilize scarce resources in a post-conflict environment to contribute to reconstruction efforts through youth service. Although their core activities focus on rebuilding homes, their impact is much broader. By engaging youth in the reconstruction of their communities and providing families with homes, JRMD is working for the broader goals of peace, reconciliation, education, safety, and health. These effects are much more difficult to measure than the number of houses built and a more rigorous evaluation is necessary to determine the long-term effects of the program. However, a

number of studies highlight the importance of rebuilding economic infrastructure of communities for "breaking the conflict trap."²⁴ At the most basic level, ensuring that people have homes will reduce their sense of relative deprivation. While building homes, the young people in Burundi are also building social capital, another critical element of post-conflict reconstruction.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone has instituted an innovative service program for former child soldiers and youth uprooted from their homes by the eleven-year civil war that ended in 2002. Nearly one-third of the population was internally displaced during the war, and physical and economic infrastructure was decimated. Today, it is among the poorest nations in the world.

The Reintegration Skills Training and Employment Generation for Ex-Combatants program, directed by the Christian Children's Fund,²⁵ aims to ease the transition for former youth combatants. These young people not

only suffered physical and psychological scars from their time in militias, but continue to face serious hurdles as they attempt to return to their communities. Former child soldiers have been deprived of educational and skills development, placing them at a disadvantage as they try to enter the work force. The program seeks to increase the social integration of ex-combatants by involving them in civic works, skills training, and reconciliation programs.

The program has two distinct phases. In the first phase, former youth soldiers work alongside young people who had not been involved with militias on civic works projects, such as building schools or hospitals. The central focus is on cooperation in achieving a shared goal, designed to help the ex-combatants and non-combatants humanize each other and build positive relations that support peace-building at the community level. Youth also participate in community dialogues, as well as reconciliation committees that seek to peacefully resolve disputes. A small stipend is provided to compensate young adults for their services.

In the second phase of the program, ex-combatants select and participate in skills trainings with local artisans, developing a trade or craft that

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will allow them to find employment or begin their own business. As in the first phase, youth are awarded a stipend for their work. Following the successful completion of their training, youth are eligible for micro-credit loans that support small business activities. Youth who have participated in the Reintegration Skills Training and Employment Generation for Ex-Combatants program report that they have a positive outlook for the future, having successfully gained essential skills that help them earn a living and participate actively in civil society. Youth participants in this program have completed scores of service projects in their communities; 650 have become apprentices; and 1,200 have received loans, with a 100% repayment rate.²⁶

Challenges to Youth Service in Post-Conflict Situations

These types of existing programs demonstrate the wide applicability and potential benefits of youth service in post-conflict situations. However, the impact of such programs is difficult to measure concretely, particularly because many of them are relatively new. Furthermore, the effectiveness of such youth service programs depends on factors that range from program design and implementation to political climates and context. An examination of the potential risks and challenges of developing service programs in post-conflict settings provides valuable lessons for future youth service policies and programs and the improvement of existing experiences.

Securing adequate funding is one the greatest challenges for youth service programs in post-conflict situations. Across the board, crisis funding tends to be short-term and with limited availability.²⁷ Once humanitarian needs are met in the immediate aftermath of conflict, fewer resources are available for longer-term post-conflict recovery efforts.²⁸ Because funding sources often prefer programming for children over programming for older youth, post-conflict interventions are particularly likely to miss the opportunity to engage youth during the critical transition periods of early and late adolescence. Securing funding to ensure the sustainability of a continuum or life-cycle approach to youth service requires that funders be willing to invest in longer-term projects that invest in the development of young people as well as the development of their communities.

Program design is a critical element to successful youth service projects, particularly in post-

conflict countries that lack infrastructure and adequate resources. One key consideration is to provide adequate incentives for participants. Full-time programs should cover a portion of the costs associated with participation so that both privileged and underprivileged youth may participate. At the same time, avoiding over-compensation allows participants to develop an ethic of working for the common good as opposed to working solely for financial gain.

One danger of youth service programs is that they may raise expectations for young people, particularly with regards to getting access to the employment. Post conflict economies do not usually offer many job opportunities. If realistic expectations are not set from the beginning, service can backfire in further deepening the marginalization of young people. Their ownership to the service-process as it presents itself in real life is an essential element for its success.

Supervision of participants is another key aspect to program success. Supervision should be designed to provide a protective environment for youth participants while allowing them to take active, leading roles in the program, instead of being passive beneficiaries. Ideally youth become the center of participatory youth service programs by conducting needs assessments in communities, taking part in the design and implementation of programs, monitoring service activity, and conducting evaluations of impact.²⁹

Youth service programs should also address critical needs of the community, region, or country in which they operate. Programs that are not modified according to specific contexts may run the risk of failure, as activities become irrelevant to the situations and environments of youth participants. Local communities should have an ownership in program design. This will strengthen its relevance to the local community and will not be seen as imposed by outsiders. All stakeholders, including youth participants,

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community leaders, local organizations, and government officials, must be included in this proves to establish pertinent and realistic goals for any youth program.³⁰ This is particularly relevant in countries recovering from civil war or inter-group conflict where different stakeholders may have had very different experiences during the conflict and different opinions about how reconstruction should proceed. Regular monitoring of programs can ensure that service activities continue to meet the goals of various stakeholders and adapt to changing contexts of society.

Development of youth service in post-conflict settings also requires special caution against the politicization or militarization of programs, as poor program management may spur violence across ethnic, gender or other socio-economic divides. Whether government-run or NGO-led, programs must align with needs for peacebuilding and development without following the agenda of specific political entities or socio-economic groups. Balanced ethnic representation of program supervisors, consistent monitoring of programs by international organizations, and partnerships with the private sector that create linkages to the community can ensure that service programs avoid the risks of politicization and violence. It is also critical that service policies are not used as a vehicle for containing young people's energy rather than unleashing their potential.

Challenges for youth service programs in general also include the evaluation of programs and assessments of the impact of programs on youth participants and communities. Successful programs should demonstrate positive impact on all stakeholders. While some preliminary evaluations have been conducted of youth service programs, more rigorous assessment will be needed to measure the broader impact of youth service on communities. Continuous, rigorous evaluation will also help ensure the effectiveness and relevance of programs and the ability to compare impacts across settings and communities.

Recommendations

Evidence has shown that the most successful youth service programs are developed and run at the grassroots level with the active involvement of youth in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the program. However, countries emerging from years of strife often lack the institutional and economic support for such programs. While it is important for in-country governments and NGOs to invest in youth service, assistance and guidance from the international community is critical for the sustainability of successful youth service programs in post-conflict settings. Actors at all levels can take steps to promote further investment in youth service as a strategy for post-conflict reconstruction.

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Local NGOs can:

- Work with local communities to identify post-conflict reconstruction needs that may be met by youth service programming;
- Design community-based youth service programs that take into account the needs of all stakeholders in their communities.

National Governments can:

- Harness the potential of young people by developing a national youth service policy (NYSP) as part of restructuring in post-conflict environments. Such policies should be carefully designed in consultation with and oversight from independent agencies to reduce the likelihood of corruption;
- Direct resources for reconstruction efforts towards programs and organizations that incorporate innovative youth service projects into their work.

International NGOs can:

- Identify and evaluate existing programs that engage youth in post-conflict recovery efforts, particularly youth service programs;
- Gather knowledge of innovation and good practice in the youth service field generally, and in post-conflict settings specifically;
- Disseminate this knowledge and using it to develop a training system for program leaders;
- Create a framework for rigorous and comparable impact assessment of youth service and other programs that address the needs of youth in post-conflict

settings to determine which interventions have the greatest impact and which programs are most cost-effective;

- Use this information to influence policymakers and to leverage additional funds from international organizations, and targeting these resources to the programs that have demonstrated positive impact.

International Agencies and Donors can:

- Support information-gathering and evaluation on the potential of youth service as a strategy for post-conflict reconstruction;
- Provide longer-term financial and technical support to organizations operating innovative youth service programs in post-conflict countries.

In any effort to promote youth service in post-conflict situations, international actors, governments, and organizations on the ground, including community organizations, local NGO's, and youth-led groups, must work together to ensure the full involvement of all stakeholders in the development of effective programming.

Conclusion

The issue of increasing youth participation in development and governance is an urgent one, especially in post-conflict settings.³¹ As stated in the *World Youth Report, 2005*, “Applying a youth analysis exposes the need to systematically support the rights of youth so that their distinct roles and capacities for survival, community recovery and conflict prevention are not sidestepped or subsumed under programs for children or adults.”³² Once young people are recognized as potential agents for positive change, there is a need to design and implement effective programs that engage them in constructive activity.

Youth service has potential as a cross-sectoral framework for addressing the programming needs of youth, communities, and society as a whole in post-conflict settings. The engagement and empowerment of youth alone cannot achieve the complete recovery of war-torn people and societies. However, when carried out through well designed, context-sensitive programs, youth service can provide a valuable addition to current interventions for youth, peace building, and development in post-conflict settings.

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ENDNOTES

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the authors adopt the definition of violent conflict as “a situation in which at least two organized parties resort to the use of force against each other,” which is found in UNDP’s publication *Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and Development in Crisis* (New York: UNDP, 2006). This term includes both inter-state and intra-state wars, as well as genocide and mass murder. The UN General Assembly defines youth as individuals between the ages 15 and 24 (inclusive). However, acknowledging that the definition of youth may vary according to different circumstances, the authors use the term broadly to include all individuals designated as youth in their respective countries. The terms “youth” and “young people” are used synonymously throughout this paper.

² Marc Sommers, “Embracing the Margins: Working with Youth Amidst War and Insecurity,” paper presented at the Brookings Blum Roundtable, Youth and Conflict session, August 4, 2006: 2.

³ Siobhán McEvoy-Levy, “Youth as Social and Political Agents: Issues in Post-Settlement Peace Building” Kroc Institute Occasional Paper #21:OP:2, 2001: 16

⁴ UNICEF, *Adolescence: A Time that Matters*, New York: UNICEF, 2002. 31

⁵ UNICEF, *The Impact of Conflict on Women and Girls in West and Central Africa and the UNICEF Response*, New York: UNICEF, 2005. 15. A child soldier is defined as “any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members.”

⁶ Jadranka Mimica and Paul Stubbs, “Between relief and development? Theories, practice and evaluation of psycho-social projects in Croatia,” *Community Development Journal*, Vol. 31, No.4, Oct. 1996: 218-90. cited in Michael Pugh, “Post-Conflict Rehabilitation,” University of Plymouth, 1998: 78, available at <http://www.jha.ac/articles/a034.htm>

⁷ In 1996, Graça Machel’s seminal report to the United Nations, “Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,” focused the world’s attention on the plight of child soldiers, unaccompanied children, and young victims of gender-based violence. The *World Youth Report, 2005* defines youth bulges as a situation in which young people constitute at least 40 percent a country’s population. The youth bulge hypothesis argues that youth bulges increase the possibility of conflict, especially when other key factors such as high levels of unemployment, economic stagnation, and restrictions on migration are also present.

⁸ For more on the youth bulge hypothesis, see: Urdal, Henrik. “The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950-2000.” Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction. The World Bank, Paper No. 14, July 2004; Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1996. Kaplan, Robert D. ‘The Coming Anarchy’, *Atlantic Monthly* 273(2): 44–76, 1994. Collier, Paul, 2000. ‘Doing Well Out of War: An Economic Perspective’, in Mats Berdal & David M. Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner (91–111)

⁹ See, for example, UN, *World Youth Report, 2005*. New York, 2005: 151, and; The World Bank, *Youth Development: Youth In Post-Conflict Settings*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005: 2

¹⁰ UNDP. *Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and Development in Crisis?* New York: UNDP, 2006: 23

¹¹ See, for example: Golombek, Silvia. *What Works in Youth Participation: Case Studies from Around the World*. Washington, DC: International Youth Federation, 2000. Kemper, Yvonne. *Youth in War to Peace Transitions: Approaches of International Organizations*. Berghoff Report No. 10. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2004. Mokwea, Steve. “Youth Participation and Social Change: Lessons and Perspectives from Around the World.” <http://unicef.org/emerg/files/Map_of_programmes.pdf.> Carter, L. Randolph and Michael Shipler. “Youth: Protagonists for Peace.” *People Building Peace II*. Ed. Paul van Tongeren *et al.* Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2005

¹² Siobhán McEvoy-Levy, 5-6

¹³ Global Service Institute Network. <http://gwbweb.wustl.edu/csd/gsi>

¹⁴ Jane Lowicki, *Beyond Consultation: In Support of More Meaningful Adolescent Participation*, New York: Women’s Commission for Refugee and Children, 2000: 2

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- ¹⁸ The World Bank, *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Potential, Limitations and Critical Factors*, Washington DC: World Bank, 2006: 7
- ¹⁹ See Eberly, Don and Reuven Gal. “A Role for Young People in Building Post-Conflict Civil Society.” *International Journal for Non-for-Profit Law*. Vol. 9, No. 4., August 2007: Pp. 78-80
- ²⁰ UNICEF-Angola, “A war worth fighting: HIV/AIDS,” http://www.unicef.org/angola/hiv_aids_1665.html
- ²¹ www.osmijeh.ba/eabout.htm
- ²² www.jrmd.org
- ²³ <http://www.jrmd.org/spip.php?article8>
- ²⁴ Collier, Paul et al. *Breaking the Conflict Trap*. The World Bank, 2003
- ²⁵ <http://www.christianchildrensfund.org/content.aspx?id=355>
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- ²⁷ UNDP, 76
- ²⁸ UNDP, 77
- ²⁹ UNDP, 77
- ³⁰ UNDP, 77
- ³¹ UNICEF, *Adolescent Programming in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations*, New York: UNICEF, 2004: 6
- ³² UN, *World Youth Report, 2005*: 147



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