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# What Happens to Youth During and After Wars?

## A Preliminary Review of Literature on Africa and an Assessment of the Debate

Report prepared for RAWOO by

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# Contents

# Preface

Issues related to peace and peace processes are increasingly part of the development policy dialogue. These issues have been a concern of RAWOO since 1997. Of particular concern is the mismatch between intentions and realities in the regions where peace treaties have been concluded.

In its advisory report *Mobilizing Knowledge for Post-Conflict Management and Development at the Local Level (May 2000),* RAWOO presented its views to the Dutch government. RAWOO proposed facilitating an interactive and programmatic process for designing an international programme of research cooperation that would respond to the needs of people who live in areas where peace treaties have been concluded. Such a programme would enable stakeholders at the local level to identify gaps in their knowledge, to develop their own research capacity, and to learn from similar situations in other countries.

The Dutch government did not immediately give RAWOO a green light. It did, however, encourage RAWOO to explore the need for research on this issue in Africa. When the Council consulted experts in this field, it was asked to focus on the role and position of child soldiers and of youth in general both during and after armed conflicts in Africa.

This report describes the current state of affairs with regard to this subject. The authors have reviewed the literature, also in light of their own professional experience in the field. They have managed to place the problem of child soldiers in a wider context, and have made a number of recommendations.

RAWOO appreciates the authors' concern for the young people in Africa whom they write about. We hope that the report will encourage both academics and policy-makers to pay more attention to the human dimension of peace-building in general and to this group in particular. We also hope that the report will provide new stimulus for pursuing what we think is needed: a comprehensive and international research agenda that will help to achieve the human and institutional capacity-building that is needed for peace and reconciliation in the South.

*Marijke Veldhuis*
*Ed Maan*
RAWOO Secretariat

# Introduction

The Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council (RAWOO) submitted an advisory report to the Dutch government entitled *Mobilizing Knowledge for Post-Conflict Management and Development at the Local Level* (May 2000). In her reaction the Minister for Development Co-operation suggested that follow-up action should be focused on countries in Africa.

RAWOO set out to first explore the relevance of and potential for a broad-based international research initiative on the involvement and role of youth in the transition from war to peace in African countries. As part of the exploration, RAWOO commissioned us to make a scan of the literature on youth-related themes in the context of conflict management, and to make an assessment of the state of the art, identifying sub-themes that have attracted attention and mentioning any obvious gaps. We were also asked to discuss briefly the wider societal relevance of research on this topic in specific post-conflict countries and, where possible, to identify local research capacities.

The Terms of Reference for the study contained the following specific questions:
- What aspects can be distinguished under the broad theme 'Youth in a post-conflict setting'?
- What does the literature say about the relevance of the theme for post-war peace-building in specific African countries that are emerging from violent conflict, including Mozambique, Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Great Lakes region?
- Which relevant local research capacity is present in these countries (both individuals and institutions)?
- What do the sources say about the degree to which the potential users of research (government and civil society) within these countries are or would be committed to developing youth-related policies and programmes? What about the international community?
- What does the literature say about the scope for comparative approaches? (For instance, how does the experience of Mozambique with respect to the demobilization and rehabilitation of child soldiers compare with the experience of Sierra Leone or Liberia?)

In response to this request, the present report offers a brief general discussion of youth and violence in Africa, followed by more specific consideration of several sub-topics within the context of various African conflict zones: youth in military forces and armed opposition groups, post-conflict recovery, and youth-related aspects of conflict management.

The reader will note that we have interpreted this brief rather narrowly and therefore restrict our analysis mainly to young people who are participating directly in the prosecution of war. We have made no attempt to review the literature that examines the impact of war on young civilians in war-torn countries, or the even larger body of material on youth as a factor in political change in Africa (De Boeck & Honwana 2000; for a working bibliography see SSRC). We have noted in passing that there is a lack of research that might help to determine why some young people are more successful than others at avoiding direct involvement in violent conflict.

A further caveat is necessary. The topic of young people and violence is liable to provoke controversy. Few parents are wholly immune from the 'folk devils' and 'moral panics' stalking societal discourse or media discussions of 'teenage violence'. Youth violence is more understandable when it is allied to a larger political cause with which the reader sympathizes. When such a larger cause is unknown or seems insupportable, any attempt at objectivity risks provoking the reader. A rational explanation of criminal violence by former anti-apartheid activists in a South African township (Marks 2001) elicits a different reaction than an equivalent attempt to account for deviant behaviour among oppressed young people who are exploited for their labour in the diamonds fields of Sierra Leone. The widely shared view is that the latter young people are motivated by 'greed, not grievance' (cf. Smillie et al. 2000, Kandeh 2001). Different regional histories also play a part. A reader who is versed in the literature on peasant and slave revolts in the Americas is more likely to find insurgency 'excusable' than a reader who is more familiar with sectarian violence or ethnic riots in Africa or South Asia.

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## Youth and war in Africa: some controversies

Young people are - and always have been - especially prominent in war, both as fighters and as victims. From ancient times military trainers have made use of the energy and daring of youth in battle. The young also figure prominently among civilian casualties, in part because of children's greater vulnerability to disease and malnutrition. Several of the 'new wars' sweeping Africa employ terror tactics that involve the deliberate targeting of women and young children. But it has also been claimed that this violence is a product of a 'youth crisis'. In demographic terms, Africa is the world's 'youngest' continent, as well as its poorest and least developed. In many African countries nearly half the population is aged between 5 and 24. In Europe the equivalent age range accounts for only about one quarter of the overall population. In other words, school systems and the job market in African countries have to cope with twice the demand that school systems and job markets in Europe have to cope with. Widespread levels of disaffection and violence can reflect a lack of educational opportunities and job prospects. Although the pressure that populations place on natural resources is only one among many causes of conflict (cf. Homer-Dixon 1999), a global econometric study of post-1960 internal wars by Collier (2000) indicates that having a large number of poorly educated young men in the population, especially in countries with abundant mineral resources, is a better predictor of outbreaks of violent conflict than ethnic rivalries or autocratic rule.

To conclude, however, that a lack of education and jobs is the major cause of African wars is to invite heated debate. All African countries face a demographically driven 'youth crisis', but not all have experienced civil wars. Special circumstances might explain why war breaks out only in some cases (even if some pessimists wonder whether it is only a matter of time before Nigeria and Kenya, say, go the way of Liberia or Rwanda). Smillie et al. (2000), for example, suggest that the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone is less a product of youth frustrations than of a criminal conspiracy to control readily exploitable alluvial diamond resources.

The view of war as criminality has been argued on the basis of a wider canvas than Sierra Leone. One group of authors (as represented in a collection edited by Berdal and Malone, 2001) argues that internal conflicts stem more from 'greed' (pursuit of economic opportunities) than from 'grievance'. The opposition is arguably false. All wars require resources, and it is often very hard to decide whether or not economic factors cause or correlate with conflict. Le Billon (2000), in a study written to guide the NGO community through the 'greed not grievance' debate, concludes only that economic circumstances prolong violent conflicts, not that war is caused by economic competition alone.

It is also clear that the correlation between war and resources is far from perfect. Diamonds (or other highly valued, readily mined mineral resources) may be a factor in the conflicts in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, but not in Mozambique or Algeria. In this respect, the regional uprising in Casamance (Senegal) is a useful test-case (De Jong 2000). In several respects it resembles the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, but diamonds do not enter the picture. Nor, De Jong argues, is the conflict as readily explained by ethnic factors as is sometimes assumed. Separatist forces enjoy only limited support from the Jola community, on whose behalf they appear to fight. The fighters are mixed in terms of origin. A better explanation, De Jong suggests, would place more emphasis on youth disaffection and unemployment resulting from structural adjustment and the 'downsizing' of the Senegalese state (cf. Diouf 1996).

Other authorities (see below) point out that youth violence in Africa is not limited to zones of recognised 'civil war'. To describe conflict between criminals, vigilantes and state authorities in 'peaceful' eastern Nigeria, Reno (2002) uses terms that might also apply to 'warlord' violence in the Liberian civil war (Reno 1998). The annual murder rate in 'peaceful' South Africa is nearly double the estimated death rate from the civil war in Sierra Leone. Both countries, it has been suggested, illustrate that there is a link between the current levels of anti-social violence (whether dubbed 'war' or 'criminality') and earlier episodes of youth mobilization for political purposes. In South Africa mobilization by township youth helped overthrow apartheid in the 1980s. In Sierra Leone, unemployed youth were at times deployed in the electoral violence and anti-smuggling operations through which the one-party state regime hung on to power in the 1970s and 1980s. Abdullah (1997) and Kandeh (2001) link these earlier episodes with the 'lumpen violence' of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) during the 1990s (cf. Bangura 1997). On the basis of careful empirical analysis of the South African case, Marks (2001) shows that although some anti-apartheid activists did in fact become involved in vigilantism and township gang warfare, the link between youth political activism and later criminal violence is much less general or direct than often alleged. The same kind of revision is now needed in the case of Sierra Leone, given that the recent demobilization exercise (2001-2002) has made it clear that most RUF volunteers came from populations along the eastern borders who were deeply opposed to the one-party regime.

Profound disagreements over how to interpret the phenomenon of war in post-Cold War Africa also reflect fundamental differences in the way that the phenomenon of 'civil war' is conceptualized. Broadly speaking, it is possible to distinguish two types of analytical approaches: 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'. The top-down approach focuses on war leaders, and the bottom-up approach on strife as a social process.

There are two main variants of the top-down approach. Analysts reflecting upon European experience tend to see war - even civil war - as a tool of state-craft. Modern European states were forged through the imposition of a monopoly on violence by elites (cf. Tilly 1985). According to this account, war is a necessary evil in the process of state formation. Analysts schooled in North American values, however, are more inclined to think of war as a liberating experience (consistent with the American revolution). This second point of view sustained for a number of years the expectation that post-colonial conflicts in Africa (such as the Nigerian or Sudanese civil wars) would result in more coherent political units (perhaps even, eventually, a United States of Africa). War, it was supposed, would allow colonially imposed boundaries to be redrawn in better alignment with the realities of African civil society. Even today, analysts schooled in this expectation sometimes express surprise at the lack of progressive movements for revolutionary change in a continent so dogged by poverty, oppression and neo-colonial exploitation (cf. Reno 2002).

The 'bottom-up' approach, however, looks more to processes of social and institutional change on a continent thoroughly 'globalised' by several centuries of slave trade and colonialism, and undergoing far-reaching, post-Cold War economic restructuring. Some analysts draw on 'new' social movement theory. Others stress the Durkheimian legacy in social science.

Contemporary analysis of social movements (influenced by the work of Foucault, Habermas and Touraine, and other social theorists) tends to frame its approach in terms of the politics of identity, and on the resources required to pursue such concerns. The focus is placed on competition and the production of social difference. Durkheimians, by contrast, address the

possibility of coordination under conditions of globalization. They focus on what is conducive to social solidarity in a complex, fractured, and rapidly changing world (Douglas & Nye 1998, cf. Archibald & Richards 2002).

The potential of the social movement approach is well illustrated by Marks's study of youth violence in South Africa (Marks 2001). She focuses on the resources mobilized and the 'social capital' created by the involvement of township youth in the anti-apartheid struggle. The legacy lives on, but in the absence of a single unifying cause diversity is the norm. Some groups and individuals engage constructively with social issues, but they are embracing a new range of concerns, including water quality and HIV/AIDS. Others invest their capacities in the wider society, and become successful professionals, in business or government. Others employ what they have learnt in a vigilantism verging on gang warfare, while a few become sucked into car-jacking and other forms of criminal violence. But this - it is implied - is a normal range of outcomes, across a spectrum from good to bad. There is no specific or direct link between youth activism and later anti-social violence. Violence is not a contagious disease.

The Durkheimian approach deserves a brief introduction, as a framework for thinking analytically about the role of education and employment in the making and re-making of society (Richards & Vlassenroot 2002). Studying historical and ethnographic data at the end of the 19$^{th}$ century led Emile Durkheim to the conclusion that the division of labour was the crucial factor in the emergence of social understanding. In agrarian society, where there is little occupational specialization, social solidarity (the individual's sense of obligation to the wider group) is sustained through religious observance. With increasingly dense social interaction and greater occupational specialization - as in societies experiencing population pressure and undergoing rapid urbanization and improvement in communications - new rules come into play. These tend to depend less on religion and more on secular institutions. Durkheim attached special significance to the rise of trade and professional associations, and to educational systems, as a means of fostering moral innovation within civil society. But Durkheim also warned against assuming that social change always results in stable outcomes. 'Social pathologies' engender conflict. Civil strife - in Durkheimian terms - results from inappropriate institutional arrangements, including educational failure and a 'forced' division of labour (one which frustrates natural abilities). If having a large proportion of ill-educated, unemployed young men in the population is a factor conducive to civil war in Africa, as Collier (2000) concludes, then addressing the circumstances through which a forced division of labour is maintained may be a key to longer-term peace (Richards & Vlassenroot 2002).

Africa has a long history of a forced division of labour under the slave trade and colonialism. The pattern has continued into the contemporary period. Much of Africa's urbanization - still predominantly coastal - serves the needs of externally oriented, neo-colonial economies. The wars of the Mano River region (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea) are being fought in an area where rivalry between British, French and American trading interests have resulted in three sizeable coastal cities to tap a hinterland which had enough resources perhaps to support one such centre. Young people flock to these cities, but do not necessarily find an outlet for their talents and energies. They enter educational systems that are corrupted by the politics of patrimonial favouritism and that are no doubt better suited to training people for a global job market than for rebuilding the local society and the economy of the rural interior. Modern satellite communications bring the global revolution to the television screens of every backstreet bar, but modern immigration restrictions in Europe and North America prevent young people from taking up the 'global' job opportunities they are given a glimpse of.

In Durkheimian terms, war in Africa is not diplomacy by other means, as Clausewitz envisaged, but social pathology. Where neither political leadership nor educational guidance proves adequate for the task, opportunist militia leaders fill the gap, setting themselves up as 'frontier' rallying points for the people who are most deeply disaffected from a society on the verge of collapse (cf. Kopytoff 1987). Violence takes the form of a slave revolt, marked by extremes of atrocity and millenarian enthusiasm (Richards 2003). War is no longer aimed at controlling the strategic high ground of an economy or a state, but is an attempt to shake society to its very roots. The analytical task is to understand how social loyalties can be recreated under such unpropitious circumstances. Specifically, there is a need to discover paths where more peaceful values can be encouraged in spite of an ongoing crisis in institutional arrangements and moral values. One such path, it can be argued, could well be educational reform, especially a greater emphasis on the formation of both practical and social skills. More is required than just vocational training. Educational reform must provide a context in which young people are able to envisage for themselves new, secure and viable social worlds. The antidote to anti-social violence is to involve young people in the making of society.

# Youth in situations of conflict and post-conflict

Within Africa there are four main zones of post-Cold War 'internal war': the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region, the former Portuguese colonial territories (Angola and Mozambique), and the Upper Guinea/Mano River zone in West Africa. Each zone is rather distinct. Instability in the Horn of Africa and the former Portuguese territories has its roots in the Cold War. In the specific case of Sudan it can be seen as a largely unresolved issue of post-colonial nation-building, further complicated by religious rivalries and oil. (In this regard it resembles wars in Nigeria – in the past and perhaps in the future.) Perhaps the clearest demonstrations of the need to take into account the complex and at times inchoate sub-politics of youth, as well as knowledge and explanations 'from below', are the conflicts in the Upper Guinea (West Africa) and Great Lakes regions. This paper will focus in particular on the literature describing conflict and post-conflict situations in these two regions, and on the lessons learnt there, while not ignoring important lessons from other areas. The earlier (successful) insurgency led by Museveni in Uganda and the (less successful) insurgency of the Renamo (National Resistance Movement) in Mozambique seem particularly significant, for example with regard to the recruitment, deployment and demobilization of relatively large numbers of child and female combatants.

## 1. Mobilization of children and teenagers, including girls
The recruitment of young people to active service in African armies and militia forces (Furley 1995) is a topic that carries an enormous emotional charge. It is a natural rallying point for anti-war protest, and agencies raising funds for the rehabilitation of child soldiers have attracted widespread support, also from celebrities. Yet the phenomenon is by no means new or restricted to Africa. The squire to a medieval knight began to learn his profession as a young teenager. Napoleon was an under-age ensign. Child soldiers were not uncommon in the American Civil War. Only in the last decade did the British army stop sending 17-year-olds into battle. Even today, children aged 16 can bear arms in US militia. (This could be the reason that the USA remains one of only two countries in the world not to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a document that opposes military service below the age of 18.) Nor are female combatants a new phenomenon. The 19th-century army of the West African kingdom of Dahomey was famous for its 'amazon' regiment. McKay and Mazurana (2002), in the course of a preliminary, world-wide review of girls serving in the military and in militias and armed opposition groups, found that in 1990-2000, female recruits were given combat roles in 41% of the 39 countries surveyed. Propensity to use female soldiers seems especially high in Africa. McKay and Mazurana (2002) cite evidence showing that girls and women accounted for up to 30% of recruitment to armed opposition groups in Ethiopia and Sierra Leone.

## 2. Children and young women as recruits
There is little doubt that many children and young women end up in armies and armed opposition groups either because they are forced to join or because they have little if any other option. In two-thirds of the 39 countries surveyed, McKay and Mazurana (2002) found evidence that females were being press-ganged or abducted. War Child and other agencies that campaign on behalf of child soldiers tell mainly about abduction, but this is only part of the story. As yet there have been few empirical studies about child soldiers, or more generally about what happens to children in war. Of the material on child recruitment, much had been told to interviewers under highly stressful conditions (e.g. in demobilization camps, where it would clearly be in the interest of the young combatant to go along with the dominant discourse). But information obtained from former child soldiers who have been

demobilized and re-settled for a long time also has its drawbacks. Schafer (2001) describes in detail the limitations of post-war testimony, pointing out that memory is as much about the present and future as it is about the past. People remember not for scientific or historical reasons, but as members of current social communities, and they tend to edit the record accordingly. One thing that can be said with certainty, however, is that the editing process in a demobilization camp is obviously very different from the editing process that takes place after re-settlement, since the stories that emerge are sometimes remarkably different.

The war has been over long enough in Mozambique for it to serve as an important test case. Earlier literature on the recruitment of children by Renamo (notably Wilson 1992, cf. Vines 1991) emphasized the adaptability and malleability of young abductees and stressed the significance not only of abduction but also of traumatic initiation as a way of breaking links with a social past and creating a loyal cadre totally dependent on the movement. The picture is broadly confirmed by the detailed post-war research of South African anthropologist Honwana (1999), who found evidence, working in southern Mozambique, of abduction, traumatization, and systematic attempts to involve children in atrocities (e.g. by making recruits execute attempted deserters). She describes a child forced to kill his father after the father tried to arrange for them both to escape from a Renamo base. But Honwana worked in areas mainly under government control during the war, where local Renamo groups will have been under greater pressure to stem defections and maintain loyalty through fear. And she acknowledges that her research was supported by a humanitarian agency working for the demobilization and rehabilitation of ex-combatants.

The work of Jessica Schafer (undertaken for an Oxford doctorate) paints a very different picture (Schafer 2001). Working in the centre and north of the country, and among marginalized Ndau people noted for their sympathy for Renamo, Schafer finds much less evidence of incorporation through abduction and fear. Many young people joined either because it seemed like just another job, in an area where labour migration and low-paid, back-breaking work is a long-established tradition, or because they or their parents actively sympathized with the movement. Others joined because it was a way of avoiding trouble (e.g. hunger or harassment by government troops). Few cadres reported being subjected to traumatic initiation rituals, and few mentioned atrocities they were forced to commit. Many talked about ideological training, and the informal patterns of cooperation that emerged between Renamo groups and local communities. Even sexual contact seems to have been strictly limited, at least among Renamo cadres (cf. West 2000). Celibacy seems to have been more common than the sexual violence often presumed typical of 'anarchic' guerrilla movements such as the RUF (Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone). Schafer is very careful to contextualize her results, aware that earlier academic accounts may have been rather dependent on indirect information – some of it from government sources – and unduly influenced by Renamo's dubious origins as a puppet of the Rhodesian and South African security services. But Schafer readily admits that the picture could have been very different in different parts of the country. Indeed, she suggests that it might be impossible ever to achieve a unified account of the Mozambique war.

A similarly mixed picture appears to be emerging from Sierra Leone now that research among ex-combatants has become more feasible since the ending of hostilities in February 2002. It is clear that there was much more organization within RUF camps, and much more voluntary adhesion than the movement's detractors were prepared to allow. Given the practical incentives for towing an agency line, it is in fact remarkable that combatants undergoing demobilization continue to be as proud of their movement as they are and as willing to argue the rightness of their cause. Some of the most striking material in this regard comes from female combatants (Shepler 2002, cf.Archibald & Richards 2002). One

female former member of the RUF cadre said that she was in greater danger of sexual abuse as an ex-combatant undergoing skills training camp in an 'enemy' area than she had been while in the RUF (Paul Richards, field notes, Makali, Tonkolili District, October 2002). Such material comes mainly from informants who entered the war as child soldiers but left it as young adults.

How much these young fighters should be credited with exercising their own agency remains in dispute. Wessells (2002), in a critique of Peters & Richards (1998), has suggested that a child, compared with an adult, may have so few real choices that it is unrealistic to talk about the 'rational' decision to join a militia. But Peters & Richards (1998) were reporting the views of young teenagers who felt themselves to be fully adult since they had been fending entirely for themselves for a number of years. There is considerable cross-cultural variation in the point at which children become adults (Honwana 1999).

This aside, the questions remain why young people join militias and why recruiters are interested in or willing to accept children and young people. McKay and Mazurana (2002) found 14 routes by which girls and young women joined armies and militias. These include abduction, being born to parents in the forces, being an outcast, and joining to gain access to food, shelter and an income, or to further a career. None of the routes were based on ideological commitment despite the fact that some young fighters – young women included – explicitly mentioned this factor as a reason for volunteering to join the RUF in Sierra Leone (Archibald & Richards 2002). McKay and Mazurana do acknowledge, however, that state violence against families can sometimes be a significant factor. (Young people joined Charles Taylor's rebel forces in Liberia to seek revenge for parents who died in purges mounted by Samuel Doe, cf. Ellis 1999, Richards 1995).

Child soldiers and young female combatants play a variety of roles. Even a child of ten is generally strong enough to handle a modern lightweight semi-automatic weapon, and several sources suggest that children are determined and courageous fighters. Schafer (2001) is somewhat sceptical of the notion that children are attractive recruits because fighting is an extension of play, or that they are less fearful than adults. (She also doubts the assertion that fear-inhibiting drugs have been used extensively to prepare young fighters for battle.) But it is widely noted that teenagers are more effective fighters because they are less hampered by family worries. Most of Schafer's interviewees admitted frankly that they found combat a frightening business at first, but they had learned to cope. (It is of course only survivors who can say this.)

Like children, women play multiple roles in militias. They work among other things as porters, care-givers, and providers of sexual services. Perhaps surprisingly, combat turns out to be the single most important of these roles, by quite a margin. Deployment as a combatant featured in 41% of the cases examined by McKay and Mazurana (2002). The next most important roles were as providers of sexual services (28%) and as porters (25%). McKay and Mazurana concede that they were unable to provide strong documentation for their assertions regarding roles, which are weakened further by the fact that women frequently play multiple roles. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the single most important reason to recruit young women is that they are effective at the battlefront. This finding tends to be supported by one of the very few detailed studies of women's involvement : an interview-based study by West (2000) of female ex-combatants in the Frelimo guerrilla army during the independence struggle against the Portuguese. West also notes that women made effective spies and infiltrators, since they attracted less attention than adult males (West 2000). Children are sometimes used in this role, for similar reasons. For an overview of women in African wars see Turshen & Twagiramariya (1998, cf. Cock 1991, Mama 1992).

## 3. Demobilization programmes and youth

Much discussion of youth in post-conflict situations begins with the issue of ex-combatants and demobilization. Most combatants are young but only a minority are under-age (see below). The issue of under-age combatants has been the subject of an increasing number of studies, debates and conferences over the last decade (see, for example, Furley 1995; Goodwin-Gill & Cohn 1994; Human Rights Watch 1996; Machel 2001; Wessells 2002). The literature is weighted towards the 'child soldier' issue. Less is known about the background and social organization of older (but still youthful) ex-combatants. As McKay & Mazurana (2002) note, even less attention has been paid to female combatants. There is a tendency among practitioners and policy-makers, though perhaps more particularly among researchers, to move away from thinking based on a 'victims of circumstance (forced conscription)' model and towards more sensitive explanations that take into account socio-economic marginalization and cultural and political obstacles to personal development. This awareness has resulted in support for post-war programmes for ex-child soldiers which are focused not so much on trauma-counselling and psychological help as on providing the ex-soldiers with opportunities for going back to school, acquiring skills, and finding employment. A considerable amount of knowledge has been derived from analyses of best practices in DDR (Demobilization, Demilitarization and Reintegration) programmes in Africa (Kingma 2000, Ball 1997, Colletta 1997). In practice, however, such programmes remain dogged by failure as a result of many factors: lack of funds, poor timing, excessive haste, corruption and inefficiency, and a lack of local knowledge. Above all, however, imaginative and sensitive approaches based on a knowledge of the activities and circumstances of the ex-combatants themselves tend to be undermined by a polarization between donors and elites in war-affected countries in Africa. Donors tend to be impressed by the victimhood of 'child soldiers' (vulnerable, very young abductees). But the thinking of people directly affected by war tends - understandably - to be dominated by thoughts of punishing the young fighters who have caused widespread suffering in society. The issue of youth and culpability is hotly debated. Some of the most negative assessments come from intellectuals in the diaspora, who see young elements of the social underclass as culpable agents of criminal violence (cf. Abdullah 1997, Bangura 1997, Kandeh 2001). A 'discipline and punish' attitude tends to undermine plans for careful, long-term (and thus expensive) rehabilitation efforts (cf. Dolan and Schafer 1997, for discussions relating to Mozambique). It is regularly argued that anything more than 'quick and dirty' demobilization rewards a youthful criminal underclass for its participation in war. Elsewhere (Richards & Vlassenroot 2002) it is argued that a way out of this dilemma might lie in a Durkheimian emphasis on seeing violence as social pathology while at the same time seeking an antidote to violence through a more free 'division of labour' which includes schemes by which Africans can provide legal, unskilled migrant labour in areas of high demand, particularly in the North Atlantic region.

## 4. Demobilization programmes and female combatants

One of the few general surveys of women in military and para-military forces (McKay and Mazurana 2002, cf. Nordstrom 1997) notes that women tend to be more numerous in armed opposition groups than in government forces. It is therefore especially important that demobilization exercises aimed at groups like Renamo and the RUF include specific plans for meeting the needs of women. Women who are demobilizing have special problems in addition to the problems faced by men. Issues of reproductive health and the stigma attached to a female fighter loom large as women are attempting to reintegrate into often conservative rural communities. Female ex-combatants perhaps encounter more difficulties than males as they try to re-adjust to the roles and expectations of marriage, especially in rural communities. West's study of female Frelimo ex-cadres from the Mozambique war of independence showed them to be formidable, independent-minded women who felt deeply

frustrated in a society that was largely unable to make use of their capacities (West 2000). West suggests that Frelimo women ex-combatants coped well with potentially traumatizing circumstances because they had a strong sense of their own worth and ability (they were proud of what they had achieved). This is unlikely to apply to more recent cohorts of female combatants in Africa, however, especially those recruited through abduction. The worldwide sample of McKay and Mazurana (2002) showed the highest incidence of forcible recruitment to be in Africa. In general, there is a lack of information about female combatants, although several detailed academic studies are currently being conducted as a result of the peace process in Sierra Leone. Demobilization, demilitarization and reintegration (DDR) for young females tends to be badly planned. Some groups of women associated with armed opposition groups are ignored altogether because they did not carry guns, even though they may be as badly in need of reintegration as the men. This is the case for such groups of non-combatants as the RUF 'combatant wives units'. Thompson (1999) notes that DDR for Renamo cadre in Mozambique likewise failed to address the reality of girls and women forced to serve as 'wives', cooks, farm labourers and porters for Renamo. There were no data, she notes, on how many women were linked to soldiers, or abandoned. She reports cases of women forced to go home with demobilized men rather than being sent to their own home communities, as they wished.

## 5. Case studies: DDR programmes in Liberia and Sierra Leone

### Liberia
It is estimated that between 15,000 and 20,000 under-aged people took part in the Liberian conflict (1989-1997). But not even 5,000 went through the official DDR process, leaving the rest to be classified either as 'self-demobilized' or as 'children becoming adults' during their time fighting. After several failed attempts the final demobilization took place in 1996-97. This was truly a 'fast track', with demobilizing fighters spending as little as one day at the DDR site. Under-aged fighters who were accompanied by relatives or who knew the whereabouts of their family spent only a very short time at a DDR site. Only the young people without any family (or not willing to talk) went on to what were called Interim Care Centers (ICCs), where they waited for 'family tracing and reunification' There they stayed for a period of between one month and a year.

Recent research (Peters 2000) on the reintegration of Liberian former child combatants led to the following observations and conclusions:
1. Overall, the reintegration of former child combatants seems to have been quite successful, given the difficult post-war situation in Liberia; most ex-combatants feel accepted and reintegrated.
2. Although the general impression is one of positive reintegration, these young people still face considerable problems, mainly of an economic nature as a result of their lack of education and the lack of job opportunities and equipment.
3. The community, school, church, traditional leaders and elders played significant roles in the young people's reintegration process.
4. In terms of the success of their reintegration, there was no significant difference between the ex-combatants who had demobilized themselves and those who had spent time in Interim Care Centres (ICCs) receiving training and support (cf. Utas, forthcoming).
5. Former child combatants who have been in ICCs seem to become more involved in agriculture, probably because they were taught to value farming while they were in the ICC.

6. ICCs are almost always located near urban areas and no matter how basic the centres are, they are paradise compared with rural life. ICCs can therefore frustrate reintegration and lead to young people leaving their families.
7. In general, support given to former child combatants raises the expectations of this very demanding group to unrealistic levels, and can thus lead to frustration and a sort of dependency syndrome.
8. Villages and family economies that are recovering from the devastating effects of war are in need of labour. This works to the advantage of young people and former child combatants who are willing to reintegrate (cf. Utas, forthcoming).
9. Reintegration should not be narrowly interpreted only as living with parents. Some of the former child combatants studied in Peters (2000) were living with their parents or extended family, but others were living on their own or with friends, living on a plantation or other place of work (a company or mining area), or living with the security forces.
10. Due to the political situation in Liberia, many former child combatants have had the option to remain affiliated with an armed group (one of seven different security forces).
11. For girls associated with the fighting forces, the reintegration process seems to be more difficult. There are still many cases of abducted girls staying with their rebel 'husband'.
12. The food-for-work type of programme seems to be effective in providing many people with temporary work. But if no special arrangements are made to teach skills to the young people, they are left with few options after the programme stops.
13. In Liberia , secret societies re-emerged quickly after the war and stepped into the power vacuum. There are indications that these societies have established a firm hold on certain segments of rural youth, but proper data is understandably lacking on such a sensitive topic.

**Sierra Leone**

Sierra Leone has also had various DDR schemes. The first attempts to demobilize under-age fighters date back to 1993 (when the National Provisional Ruling Council ratified international conventions on child rights and child soldiers). There were two main programmes: the Children Affected by War (CAW) project, run by the Catholic Mission and funded by UNICEF; and a programme run by the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF), based on the scout camp at Grafton. Major attempts at demobilization took place in 1996-97 (Richards et al. 1997). As part of the army's agreement with donors and the incoming democratic government, the army devised its own programme to downsize the RSLMF. The plan called for training ex-soldiers for security work in the broad sense of the term. This included making and installing metal, anti-burglar windows and other construction work. This line of thinking came to an end when two major architects of army demobilization (Colonel Max-Kanga and Major Kula Samba, the army's most senior woman officer) were executed for complicity in the May 1997 coup. The RSLMF was disbanded in 1998, and has been replaced (from 2000) by a new army trained by the British. Most of the former child soldiers living in ICCs joined the renewed fighting after May 1997. Many were in danger of being hunted down by both civilians and rival armed factions, because of their military knowledge. Re-enlistment seemed the only option to many, since aid programmes closed down when donors withdrew from the country. In April 2000 UN peacekeeping troops tried to force RUF cadres in Magburaka into demobilization camps, but the attempt backfired, leading to a major crisis, as several hundred peacekeeping troops were rounded up and held hostage by young RUF fighters. The final demobilization in Sierra Leone of about 45,000 fighters was delayed until 2001-02. Having learnt a lesson from previous attempts, the operators of the scheme took care to include confidence-building measures (Richards 2001). Some fighting groups were camped. An assistance package – including the payment of school fees, vocational training facilities and a 'transitional safety allowance' – was

offered to all fighters, though many later complained that they did not receive the start-up loans and tools they had been promised following vocational training. In light of the presence of 17,400 UNAMSIL troops, a general war-weariness, and heavy pressure on rebel supply routes through Liberia, many young fighters saw demobilization as their only option. Nevertheless, tensions remain, especially as a result of delays in DDR vocational training programmes. In interviews (Peters 2002), many ex-combatants openly stated their readiness to return to the bush to fight if the democratic process does not result in a better deal for excluded youth.

Based on recent literature, the following observations can be made about the demobilization process in Sierra Leone:
1.  Although many of the younger child soldiers have been brutally abducted and forced to join, the majority of the teenage combatants seem to have joined more or less voluntarily, influenced by difficult circumstances (Peters 2002).
2.  Whenever enlistment is the result of a conscious choice, there is a danger that re-enlistment will occur the minute that difficult circumstances return (Peters 2002).
3.  Most former child soldiers are too old, or missed too much education, to go back to school (Peters 2002).
4.  Preference should be given to vocational training and agricultural skills (Richards 1999).
5.  The conflict, and the active role that young people play in it, has resulted in youth emancipation which challenges the pre-war authority (Archibald & Richards 2002).

*More research is needed on the following topics:*
•   The backgrounds of youth combatants. Are they always from poor and marginalized population groups?
•   The specific ways that demobilized youth might be able to cope if and when they realize that their empowerment via violence has been illusory, or has brought few lasting changes in their lives.
•   The way that citizenship can be developed to inculcate stable societal values in the youth (Fanthorpe 2001). Durkheim emphasized this as a principle task of education. He said that under conditions of rapid change, educators cannot simply lay down the law, but have to help young people to develop new moral commitments that are appropriate to the changed world in which they will live.
•   The reasons why groups of youth who were also vulnerable to conscription did *not* join up. Which factors can be distinguished and what significance do they have for the reintegration of ex-combatants?
•   Comparison of the generation gap in various African societies, examining this factor in relation to other factors (e.g. demographics and diasporas), and examining the role that the social exclusion of youth plays in perpetuating this gap.

## 6. Social acceptance and the reintegration process
The degree to which young ex-combatants are accepted back into their families and communities varies widely and depends on many different factors: for instance whether or not the fighter was forced to commit atrocities against his or her own family or community (a technique sometimes used in Mozambique and Angola to break social ties, Honwana 1999, Wilson 1992, but cf. Schafer 2001). In other cases it might have been the family or community that encouraged the child to join, either for political reasons or to protect the community. Or the community and family might be unaware of the child's combat history, especially if the child has fought in different places and not revealed anything about the past.

Various factors can influence the former child combatant's acceptance and reintegration:
1. The extent to which the young person committed atrocities in his or her own community.
2. The extent to which the community has suffered from the war. The more people have suffered, the greater will be their hostility towards combatants who helped to perpetrate these atrocities.
3. The behaviour of the combatant. Does he or she still have a warlike attitude?
4. The degree to which youths make themselves productive in, and socially valuable to, the community. An association of former civil defence fighters in Freetown, Sierra Leone, set up a scheme for collecting household waste, for example, and in rural areas some ex-combatants have 'reintroduced' themselves to local communities by undertaking to repair damaged roads.
5. Sensitization campaigns and counseling by NGOs can increase local willingness to accept young ex-combatants. Archibald and Richards (2002) report on local debates where members of the local community accept a degree of responsibility for young people who became fighters, since it was the community that drove them out in the first place.

As noted above, reintegration problems can be greater for girls than for boys. The involvement of young men in violence is expected. Girl fighters have broken a greater taboo. They are less marriageable than before. (A man might think, 'How can I impose discipline in my own home if my wife was once a soldier?') Women who have given birth to 'rebel-babies' seem to pose the greatest threat, since they have already made social and family commitments to another world . (People will wonder, 'Where is the husband? Will he return to claim the child and pose a threat to the community?') The idea that abducted young people break with their families and communities and are 'lost to the social environment' finds widespread resonance in many parts of war-affected rural Africa, and is presumably a major reason why the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone worked so hard to publicize this break, for example by tattooing abductees. Richards (1996) reports seeing mass graves in one part of southeast Sierra Leone, where the army had summarily executed young people who had tried to desert from the RUF and return to their village after the fighting in 1991 (Amnesty International 1992). The chief was trying to protect nine young people from the revenge of their own families. The local reasoning was that the children had been 'injected' with rebel magic and were lost to normal society forever. The lack of exit options for abducted young people, he argues, was a major factor in locking the war in place, a trend not fully reversed until after the UN peacekeeping debacle of 2000.

*More research is needed on the following topics:*
- The background and special needs of young female combatants, and of non-combatant members of armed opposition groups.
- The social and moral obstacles which keep families and communities from accepting young ex-combatants back in their midst, and how these obstacles can be overcome. This will require careful long-term fieldwork of an anthropological nature on the ideas and debates about social order that emerge or re-emerge in post-war African settings. Appropriate theoretical paradigms to guide such work are in short supply (but see cf. Archibald & Richards 2002, Douglas 1993, Sivan 1995 for a framework based on an analysis of a sect and a guerrilla band as enclave). The importance of before-and-after analysis based on long-term ethnographic study should also be stressed. Some recent studies of rural societies in Sierra Leone take into account the impact of the war as data compiled over a longer term has been re-analysed (Fanthorpe 2001, Ferme 2001; Shaw 2002), but there is as yet little published field research upon which to base firm

conclusions about the impact of the war. Other less recent conflicts are better covered from the before-and-after perspective, or on the basis of specific ethnographic studies of peace-building and post-conflict social change (e.g. Henriques 2002). Without any doubt, the literature on Mozambique, extensively cited above, represents the strongest body of such material (cf. Honwana 1999, Schafer 2001).

- Different coping strategies by which poor families manage to take care of young people who are at risk in vulnerable situations.

- Examination of the question, 'Is there a need to sensitize family and community members, and if so, what are the best ways to do this (e.g. radio, visits, drama, soap operas)?' Fardon and Furness (2000) present material on radio as a tool of both conflict promotion and conflict resolution.

- The capacities of families to absorb war orphans. What does the category 'orphan' signify in an African context? Many so-called orphanages are filled with children who know the whereabouts of parents or family, and who would return to them if it were not for the fact that the orphanage pays for their subsistence and schooling. Some orphanages are little more than schemes to access donor funds; the charitable response is more relevant to a European than an African social context. Research is needed on family livelihoods in post-war settings, and on how family-support schemes might be better devised in order to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. Archibald and Richards (2002) suggest that protection of the poorest and most vulnerable groups could be better achieved by fostering local debates about social inclusion and human rights than by tighter donor controls on aid inputs. They provide evidence that in rural communities recovering from war in Sierra Leone, there is a wide-ranging and fruitful debate going on about the social exclusion of youth as a cause of war, and about how the risk of young people returning to war might be minimized by reintegration.

- Guaranteeing the peace requires explicit examination of the processes by which some people become identified as victims and others as perpetrators. The use of politically loaded terms - 'freedom fighter', 'rebel', 'barbarian', 'hero of the resistance', 'bandit', 'criminal gang' - is widespread in the discourse on war and youth in Africa. Even the academic literature - normally so careful to choose 'neutral' (if incomprehensible) terminology - uses pejorative labels such as 'lumpen violence'. Research is needed into the dynamics of this labelling process, to determine the extent to which it is in fact a way of continuing to fight a battle by other means. Use of local terms deserves greater attention. The word *'rarray'* ('footloose youth', in Sierra Leonean Krio) would almost merit a study in itself. Liberian president Charles Taylor dubs his opponents 'terrorists' for using the very same strategies of social destabilization which his own fighters once employed. ('Warlord' is another term deserving of careful critical scrutiny.) Nowhere is the victim/perpetrator dilemma more starkly etched than in the issue of young people's culpability for war crimes. Local opinion in Rwanda considers 14 to be the age of 'criminal responsibility' for 'genocide' (itself an ambiguous and complex term which – as it is defined by the international community – excludes attempts to systematically wipe out groups of political dissidents). The mixed UN/national court for war crimes in Sierra Leone has ruled that no one below the age of 18 will appear before it, but it is unclear how the court will establish a person's exact age at the moment an offence was committed. Even the word 'youth' is full of complexity. In an African setting it can sometimes mean 'radical', as it did in various Nigerian political parties in the 1930s. At other times the term refers to social status rather than to age as such.

## 7. Trauma and psycho-social support

Contemporary conflicts are characterized by a high incidence of civilian deaths. Civilians, including children and youth, often witness or are the victims of horrible atrocities. As fighters, children and youth are also among the perpetrators of these atrocities. The extent to which these shocking experiences translate themselves into traumas which seriously affect people's daily functioning seems to be open to discussion. Debate has taken place on what Boyden (1994) called the 'apocalypse model' of conflict, which 'pathologizes children's experience in conflict' and treats 'children as passive victims rather than active survivors' (cf. Burman 1994). In particular, questions have been raised about whether it is appropriate to use Western diagnoses of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and subsequent approaches to psycho-social support (Boothby 1993, Macksoud, Dyregrov & Raundalen 1993) in non-Western environments (Bracken and Petty 1998, Boyden and Gibbs 1997, Green and Honwana 1999, Honwana 1999, Malakpa 1994). Doubts about the degree to which former child combatants suffer from PTSD have been raised by studies showing that children who were only very lightly exposed to violent conflict have been diagnosed as sufferers. Results of the diagnosis vary for comparable groups in different settings. Khmer and Laotian refugees showed low levels of PTSD whereas levels were high among Cambodians in the US (Friedman & Jaranson 1994).

This literature suggests the following general conclusions:
1. Western psychiatric and psycho-social approaches and therapies should not be copied in non-Western settings without careful preparation and adaptation (Boothby 1993).
2. Mental health programmes should be sensitive to and (where possible) based on local cultural understandings of cognitive disorder (Green and Honwana 1999).
3. Mental health programmes may treat symptoms, but they do not address any of the root causes which created the conflict in the first place.
4. Youth seem to be surprisingly resilient to violence and exposure to atrocities, perhaps because they are future-oriented.
5. The value of jobs and education, of keeping youth busy, and of giving them future prospects, cannot be underestimated for preventing the development of trauma.
6. Young people themselves have their own groups of peers who have had similar experiences. Many common problems can therefore be usefully discussed among friends.

7. Culturally sensitive psycho-social support should not focus solely on one specific target group (former child combatants, for instance) but instead should target all children or youth, or a whole community, to reduce risks of stigmatization.

8. Local trauma counselling often seems to focus on present and future practical problems and worries, rather than on the past. It is not clear whether this represses damaging memories, or whether we need a better understanding of the work of memory as a social force in African contexts. A recent study by Shaw (2002) about memory and the violence of the slave trade in Sierra Leone provides a pointer to possible directions in which post-conflict research might move. One implication of Shaw's study is that local diviners may have as big a role to play as Western trauma therapists. A study of post-war social rebuilding in Uganda (Henriques 2002) suggests that some African communities treat war itself as a kind of 'youth madness'. The process of switching off this kind of consciousness can be triggered by local institutions such as the 'beer party'. His overall conclusion is challenging. Wars do not necessarily require a process of reconciliation. Sometimes they just end and are best forgotten.

*More research is needed on:*

- The medium- and long-term effects of war on the psycho-social well-being of youth in post-war environments.
- Different strategies by which local communities cope with traumatic experiences.
- The different ways that youth rebuild identities that have been systematically destroyed as part of their initiation into military or militia life. How important is it to remove the physical markers of such initiation (e.g. military tattoos)?
- In the psycho-social recovery and reintegration of youth, what role could be played by local institutions such as the power associations (male and female secret societies) found in the Upper Guinean/Mano River conflict zone, or the initiators who prepare and protect Mayi-Mayi fighters in the Great Lakes region?

## 8. Thinking about non-combatants

There is a rich literature on 'youth in Africa' (SSRC 2001) and a quite extensive literature on the practical engagement of youth in conflict (as combatants). There is also material on child victims of violent conflict. But in some ways the most neglected key issue in the entire field is the question of what happens – both during and after a conflict – to young people who are neither combatants nor victims. This is crucial because it determines the potential for war to return. For every combatant whose reasons for joining the fighting have been documented by a researcher, we need to provide documentation on youth who might have joined but did not. In some cases, it was simply a matter of luck. They were out of town when the rebels came recruiting, they managed to run away in time, or they had friends or patrons who could provide for them when parental support failed. What is not so clearly known concerns strategies of resistance. Do African conflicts have their own groups of conscientious objectors who refuse to fight under any circumstances, even under pain of death? Wilson (1992) provides a fascinating account of how Jehovah's Witnesses in Mozambique survived Renamo by challenging the movement to kill them. It quickly became apparent to Renamo commanders that a massacre would be pointless, since it would generate no terror in the minds of believers. The Witnesses were given a special kind of 'opted-out' status: i.e. their bravery bought them an exemption of conscience. Britain, similarly, quickly dropped the execution of conscientious objectors in favour of prison sentences or forced labour in the First World War. The adverse publicity from executions would serve only to advertise the existence of objectors to conscription. A similarly intriguing aspect of the war in Sierra Leone is illustrated by how the town of Bo, alone, managed to withstand all attempts to embroil it in the conflict. It remains the one provincial urban centre not to have been damaged by fighting or bombing. The youth of Bo are multi-

ethnic, and some attempts were made by the RUF to divide the town, but this provoked memories of an earlier resistance to ethnic division during the 1977 elections. Some of the youth organizers involved in that earlier resistance were deployed again in 1991 and 1994-95 to fend off threats from the RUF. Bo had a street-level system of informers and an unarmed 'civil defence' which were coordinated mainly by youth leaders who were involved in a masquerade society ('Paddle') and in running local football clubs (Richards 1996). Much more material of this sort is needed, as well as studies of how the attitudes of non-combatants have been shaped and re-shaped by conflict. This was a topic of conversation among youth in Sierra Leone in 2002. Few had much time for the destruction wrought by the RUF, but many agreed that the RUF rebellion 'created a new awareness' among the poor. How this awareness will be used (or exploited for political advantage) is a crucial topic for post-war social research. The urban centres are key sites for such research.

# Post-war peace building and sources of instability

## 1. Education

School education is something highly valued by young people throughout Africa, though perhaps particularly so in a country like Sierra Leone, with a long history of educational development. Frustrations over the collapse of educational opportunity structures in the 1980s and 1990s were certainly a factor in fuelling the rebellion of the RUF (Richards 1996). To most youth, formal education and job training are keys to a successful life, although often there is no clear connection between being educated and obtaining a job. In a post-war setting, different categories of young people can be distinguished on the basis of their academic history. These range from young people with very little or no education, to young people who had dropped out of primary or secondary school either before the war or as a result of it, to young people who were able to finish their education.

Graduates and other young professionals joined the civil defence militia in Sierra Leone from 1996 onwards because there were few other jobs available. At the beginning of a period of conflict, war selects the least educated, but this selectivity declines with time and as a conflict becomes more general. But one can question how realistic it is to offer education for all in marginalized countries that have descended into war (see the summary of the article by El-Kenz, 1996, in Appendix 3). The key term might not be 'education' but 'educational reform'. The Durkheimian challenge of adapting curricula and educational systems to changed post-war circumstances is a huge task, and one that (as Durkheim recognized almost 100 years ago) cannot be tackled without the active involvement of the clients themselves. The actual situation on the ground in most post-conflict African countries is rather mixed - donors have begun to catch on to the idea that educational reform may be a key to strengthening peace - but the progress made up to now has been rather limited.

A survey of the field suggests the following:
1. Specially compressed curricula, called 'catch-up programmes', have been developed for young people who missed several years of school because of a war.
2. There has been some discussion by African educators of a possibly far-reaching curriculum reform (e.g. a shift towards a problem-oriented curriculum for post-war education, Mokuwa 1997).
3. In general, curricula do not seem to be relevant to many young people in these countries.
4. Often DDR programmes offer at most only a one-year waiver of school fees. After that, young people have to find other sources of funding or drop out of school.
5. It seems wise to focus investments mainly on younger children, or on young people who missed only a small portion of their schooling.
6. Many schools have been looted and destroyed during wars, and need to be rebuilt.
7. More attention should be given to schools in rural areas.
8. Some regions are so poor that children and youth will not (or cannot) attend school unless food is provided.
9. Youth in post-war situations have diverse educational backgrounds. (Some never attended school, some are primary-school drop-outs, some completed half of their secondary education, etc.)

## 2. Vocational training

For older children and teenagers, vocational training is probably more important and relevant than completing an interrupted academic education. Richards et al. (1997) calculated that even without war, the growth in white collar jobs and jobs in the formal sector in Sierra Leone would not have been enough to absorb all school graduates. In the post-war situation in most African countries, the only realistic option is self-employment in either a trade or a craft, particularly in the rural service sector. Often undervalued before the war, vocational training (especially for rural self-employment) is now a key focus of some DDR programmes. But there is still disagreement about the skills to be taught. There is a formal curriculum for, say, car mechanics, and it is easy for NGOs to programme car repair courses, but it does not make much sense to train a team of car mechanics and send them back to villages where there might be only one or two cars around (Mats Utas, personal communication). There are no formal curricula, however, for teaching many of the skills needed in rural reconstruction, such as blacksmithing, sun-baked mud-brick manufacture, or improved food processing (such as cassava milling). Young people either have to be apprenticed to local artisans or they need new skills. Some agencies are now beginning to experiment with forming rural reconstruction teams: e.g. training young ex-combatants to make spot improvements to rural roads, to build minor bridges and repair damaged culverts, etc. But if ex-combatants are to continue with minor rural construction activities after contracts with donors have expired, they need not only technical skills, but also training in how to run a micro-business. Some ex-combatants have loyalties to their cohort that could prove a useful basis for forming a small, cooperatively managed business of this kind.

To summarize:
1. Vocational skills are often valued less by young people than academic schooling, even though such skills offer better chances for income-generating activities.
2. Training in shorter cycles is easier for young people to attend who have financial responsibilities to their family (Specht & van Empel 1998).
3. Skills should be taught which offer realistic opportunities for future employment. This requires market research.
4. New methods for instructing illiterates need to be developed.
5. Collaboration with NGOs is required as well as support for established institutes that offer formal training.
6. Ideally, formal training institutes should offer pupils some kind of practical work experience, but in African countries with rundown economies, this would not be easy.
7. Productive skills will make youth financially independent or even enable them to contribute to the family income, both of which will facilitate their social acceptance.
8. Vocational training by itself is not enough for generating an income. Business training, toolkits and micro-credit are also needed.

*More research is needed on:*
- The impact of vocational training. This is difficult to measure because groups receiving training often move back to their place of birth.
- The capacity of small-scale enterprises and apprenticeships to provide an alternative to the many vocational training institutes promoted by DDR programmes (MacGaffey 1992).

## 3. Agriculture and rural development

Many developing countries in Africa have neglected appropriate development in the agricultural sector. As a result this sector is characterized by a large amount of activity at the level of subsistence or semi-subsistence. Conflicts often have a devastating impact on farming. Farms are abandoned, burned down or looted. In the post-war situation there are

often serious shortages of seed and agricultural tools. Slash-and-burn agriculture already depends on large amounts of physical labour, but even more is required when fields are heavily overgrown from neglect. Young people could be major suppliers of this labour but the farming life is often not their first preference. Reports on post-war discussions with young people in Sierra Leone (Archibald & Richards 2002) suggest that what they resent is not so much the arduous labour as their vulnerability to manipulation by traditional rural elites. This is why reform of local governance and a greater emphasis on individual rights will also help to revive rural economies, and agriculture in particular. The agricultural sector is important because it is one of the few sectors, if not the only one, that is capable of absorbing large numbers of poorly educated youths.

The following main points emerged from an examination of the literature:
1. In a post-conflict situation there is considerable need for (locally adapted) seeds and tools (Archibald & Richards 2002).
2. It is better if agricultural tools are produced by local blacksmiths because the tools can then be maintained and repaired locally. And blacksmiths are among the rural craftsmen who can offer apprenticeships for ex-combatants. Rather than distributing poorly made tools on a wide scale to young people who are re-settling, it might be more useful to rehabilitate local blacksmiths (providing them with an anvil, tools, bellows and a supply of scrap metal) on the promise that they take on a certain number of ex-combatant apprentices.
3. Young people (even former child combatants) are willing to get involved in farming if they are made aware of its benefits, and if they are offered proper incentives (e.g. training in the production of quality seeds) (Peters, forthcoming).
4. Youth seems to be a group that is open to the introduction of new and smart farming methods.

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*SYCODO, a rural youth organization*
*Small Bo is a chiefdom in Sierra Leone where local youths in December 2000 set up their own organization, the Small-Bo Youth Community Development Organization (SYCODO). The young people were determined to contribute actively to the reconstruction of their communities. Rather than approach NGOs or the government for the necessary funds, the young people felt it was important to take the first steps without outside support. With this in mind, they established an agricultural cooperative. Farmland is rented in exchange for part of the harvest. Seed rice was donated by members of SYCODO who were already engaged in farming. A board – made up of the chief, one elder of the community and three youths – was appointed to supervise the selling of rice. The organization started with ten members but within one year had increased to 220 registered members. Members are between the ages of 13 and 35. They pay monthly dues of SLL 1000. On Tuesdays and Fridays the members work on the farm, bringing their own tools with them. SYCODO has also provided volunteer labour for several community projects, including the repair of schools, roads, and showers for the market women. 'The whole idea behind it,' says one of the young members, 'is to develop the place, and we, the youth, are the energetic ones. Young people have realized that they were both the perpetrators and the victims in this war. If we could involve ourselves in rehabilitating the place, it would not make sense to go back to the bush or to destroy the place.' The organization is also working to sensitize young people to women's and children's rights, and more generally, to raise awareness among youth. Without this, they argue, young people will always remain vulnerable to manipulation by unscrupulous politicians, even (or perhaps more especially) during peacetime. 'Between 1982 and 1984 there were political rivalries here in town between various members of the political party APC who were competing for seats in parliament. The young people were used and manipulated in these rivalries and were set against each other. Fighting took place and houses were burned.' Since SYCODO expanded and is becoming involved in more community development projects, it has sent representatives to Bo and Freetown to try to raise funds.*

*More research is needed on:*

- How farming might be made more attractive to young people in zones of post-war recovery.
- How young people might become agents of change, adopting new farming methods and taking new initiatives.
- How temporary alternatives to agriculture – such as migrant labour, mining, trading, and smuggling activities – can be combined with farming in order to provide adequate employment for young people.
- How girls can be given better rural employment opportunities, including skills for the part-time generation of income.

## 4. Urbanization

When armed groups roam the countryside, many rural people flee either to major towns or cities, or to refugee camps. Where conflict is prolonged, displacement becomes semi-permanent. But when peace returns, most people hope to go back home. Some, however, figure their chances of making a living will be much higher in the town or city than in a destroyed village. (For the urban resettlement plans of ex-combatants in Mozambique, see Dolan & Schafer 1997). Young people in particular often seem to prefer urban centres. Going back to destroyed villages, where there is no entertainment, and giving all their energy to semi-subsistence agriculture is not an attractive prospect. It seems that former child combatants, even more than other groups of young people, hope to make their living in the city. This is partly due to the fact that some are afraid to return home. Others find village life unattractive. Mining camps attract both urban and rural youth. Many young women in these camps sell food or provide sexual services.

*More research is needed on:*

- The reasons why rural youth choose to stay in, or return to, urban areas. The incentives that could persuade them to stay in their village . What they think could make rural life more attractive.
- How rural youth living in urban areas make a living.
- The impact of young migrant labour and its effects on social coherence.

## 5. Violence, drug abuse, youth gangs, prostitution

There is little evidence that post-war situations are necessarily more violent than pre-war situations. However, there are several specific post-conflict problems that occur, such as the relatively large number of weapons still around (which is not to say that local quarrels are always fought out with weapons) and drug addiction (although this appears to be restricted to rather small numbers of ex-fighters). Overall, it seems that youth who were actually in combat and have become inured to it, also have the capacity to place the experience in a specific 'wartime limbo' (cf. Henriques 2002). Research on township violence in South Africa refutes the idea that there is any direct carry-over from the anti-apartheid struggle (Marks 2001). There is little evidence that violence undergoes automatic cultural transmission, provided the social causes are addressed. For many youths, marginalization lay behind their joining militias in the first place. If marginalization continues, so does the risk that the youths might one day be re-recruited by militia organizers. It seems that any post-war increase in prostitution among girls and young women reflects the difficult situation many of them were in during war (in refugee camps, for instance, where they were preyed upon by soldiers and humanitarian workers).

*More research is needed on:*

- What causes young people who were previously violent to resort to peace (cf. Henriques 2002).
- Whether there is a relationship between the numbers of hidden or un-reclaimed weapons and post-war levels of violence.
- Domestic violence, and how it relates to a conflict's history.
- Which groups of young people are vulnerable to drug abuse and which factors might reduce drug dependence. The perceptions among different categories of youth regarding the use of drugs.
- The impact that militias' modes of organization have on post-war social cohesion and authority structures. Is joining a militia considered a career option? What is the role of ideology in recruitment to militias?
- How the availability and quality of social services affects the propensity of youth to join militias.
- Which categories of youth are particularly susceptible to joining violent youth gangs. Which factors (socio-economic, political, etc.) make it more likely that youth will engage in violent youth gangs. What turns gangs and youth groups (scouts, for instance) into militias.
- The ties between gangs and militias and politicians.
- The impact of conflict on the commercial sex industry, and the different reasons why girls and young women continue or discontinue this activity after a conflict ends.
- International dimensions of increasing youth violence (cf. El-Kenz 1996).

## 6. HIV/AIDS

Africa is the continent currently most affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. HIV/AIDS is sexually transmitted, and is thus associated with the more sexually active part of the population. In short, it is an infection biased towards younger people, though symptomatic AIDS may emerge a decade or more after infection (i.e. in young middle age). In Africa HIV/AIDS is an infection of mobility - associated with long-distance labour migration routes and transport corridors. Its spread seems to be exacerbated especially by the mobility and irregular sexual liaisons caused by war. Militia combatants and peacekeeping forces are among the vectors of the disease.

Data on HIV infection rates among militia forces are sparse, but there is every reason to suspect that rebel groups such as the RUF in Sierra Leone or Renamo in Mozambique - where abduction and rape of young females was widespread - have been potent factors in spreading the disease. The wars in West Africa (Liberia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Senegal/Casamance) since the late 1980s connected the Upper Guinean/Mano River region with the main HIV 'corridor' in West Africa (the French colonial migrant labour routes from Burkina Faso and Mali to coastal Cote d'Ivoire). Combatants from Liberia, and later Sierra Leone, then found their way to the conflict in Casamance (Senegal) and participated in sporadic fighting in Guinea.

Infection rates among peacekeeping forces are closely guarded secrets, but CIA sources in 2000 estimated that infection rates among the officer corps in the Zimbabwean and Angolan armed forces might range from 20 to 60 per cent. There are fears that such figures might also be true for the Nigerian army, which is heavily involved in peace enforcement in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Better-paid officers are in the best position to have multiple partners. Young women hang out in the beach bars and other entertainment spots frequented by peacekeeping forces in Sierra Leone. Condoms are standard issue for UN peacekeeping forces in Sierra Leone, but how much these are used is unknown.

Reliable health statistics are among the casualties of conflict. In a country like Mozambique it is hard to separate out the influence of war from the longer-term effects of long-distance labour migration as causes of high HIV infection rates. But some rather specific data from Sierra Leone (a country where young people have not engaged in long-distance labour migration on any large scale) indicate the extent to which war causes potential HIV/AIDS problems of a considerable magnitude.

Pre-war Sierra Leone had a very low HIV figure. Even in 1999 the official HIV/AIDS infection rate in Sierra Leone was estimated by the United Nations to be 2.99 per cent. But the war seriously disrupted data gathering, and the true figure is probably higher. This is suggested by data on infection rates for urban women attending ante-natal clinics. The figure rose from 4 per cent in 1995 to 7 per cent in 1997, and projecting these figures forward would give a rate of 11.5 per cent in 2001 (i.e. one in ten of all young mothers). A survey of the police in 1996 found an HIV rate of 8.6 per cent. But the most worrying data of all concern a total of 1099 young males presenting themselves for recruitment into the new national army, who were screened in February 1999. This group had an infection rate of 21.3 per cent. Applicants were aged 18-30, from all parts of the country, with higher than average educational backgrounds (secondary or university). Some of the highest rates - above 30 per cent - were found among provincial applicants (from Bo, Kenema and Kono - all alluvial diamond mining districts). These applicants were not, it should be stressed, exposed to HIV/AIDS through military service, but were as yet only candidates for recruitment. In this respect they might be regarded as typical of the much larger pool of educated job seekers who have survived several years of dislocation caused by war. The figures suggest that young people in war-affected countries in Africa can expect to find themselves plunged into the kind of high-risk HIV environments hitherto only found in countries such as Botswana and Zimbabwe.

Rugalema (forthcoming) reports a degree of fatalism among young Tanzanians regarding the HIV risk. It is but one of many uncertainties in life, and not the one that presses most immediately. They comment that well-off older men (civil servants and army officers) are more likely to contract the disease than hard-working young people struggling to stay alive. Some young quarry workers told Rugalema that they were far too tired at the end of a day to look for multiple sexual partners. But a bigger problem may be a marked rise in frustration and dissatisfaction on the part of young men dislocated by war, who find it difficult to re-settle because they have no assets and they cannot find a steady job. Whereas before, most young men had settled down and were focused on raising families by the time they reached their 30s and 40s, the war in Sierra Leone seems to prolong the period in which young males roam, trying to establish themselves financially and start a family. It is fairly typical to encounter men approaching middle age who have started several families by different women in different localities. This reflects the dislocations of the war, but the men themselves will also point to their lack of proper training. (Eleven years of war disrupted any attempts to complete their schooling, professional training or an apprenticeship.) Wives move on, unable to cope with grinding poverty, or the man himself shifts partners, hoping to strike up a more advantageous relationship, or to pick up another training opportunity or job. It has been argued that a growing rootlessness was - in any case - a factor in bringing war to Sierra Leone (Richards 1996). One recent study firmly concluded that labouring as a 'sand-sand boy' in the alluvial diamond pits is hugely exploitative of the young men, and that the country will not settle down until there are better and more rewarding job opportunities (OTI 2000). In short - as with disarmament and demobilization - a key to managing the HIV/AIDS crisis may be the speed with which post-war development opens up stabilizing employment opportunities for the young and foot-loose (Richards 1999, 2001). Increasing the stability of the population through sound employment opportunities (e.g. by facilitating

fair prices for rural products, or through innovations aimed at small farmers and rural service providers) is likely to be as important as medically oriented disease-control strategies, but there are as yet few published analyses addressing the issues (cf. Rugalema 1999; Mutangadura et al.1999).

The special vulnerability of young girls to HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases in countries facing or recovering from war should be stressed. Claims have been made of widespread abuse of under-age girls by peacekeeping troops and locally recruited humanitarian workers in the West African conflict zone. These abused young refugees could be carrying HIV infection to the general population as they are resettled and marry after the war.

Archibald (2002) collected material related to this issue which was derived from discussions with war-affected populations who were returning to their isolated villages. Villagers talked about gender bias and women's rights (e.g. the rights of girls to basic education). An interesting set of inter-related factors emerged. Parents are very conscious of the vulnerability of their young daughters to sexual abuse. Remote villages lack schools. To send a daughter to a school in a nearby town, where she will not be properly supervised or protected, may result in a teenage pregnancy by an unsuitable partner who might then abandon the girl. Even irrespective of the risk that she will contract HIV/AIDS, villagers suggest that under such circumstances it is better to keep the girl within the 'traditional' system that would have her marry a local farmer at age 15. At least then she remains within the village, her children perpetuate the village, and the son-in-law is known and helps to support the girl's parents. But villagers aspire to education for their daughters. The answer for the longer term, they think, is to have a local school. For that they need a road (or at least to rehabilitate roads that have fallen into disuse during the fighting). They cannot acquire and retain decent teachers without road access. It is in a way quite surprising to see how an entire set of gender issues - better education for girls, closer parenting, less sexual abuse, better sexual health, and the development of an entire community - might centre on such a key but mundane aspect of post-war reconstruction as rural road repair. The mobilization of young ex-combatants for such repair activities (Richards 1999) might thus go hand-in-hand with HIV/AIDS prevention.

## 7. Inter-generational tensions and youth emancipation

Generational tensions can be one of the reasons why young people join a militia. More important, however, is the fact that children and teenagers who felt powerless and marginalized before the war, experience power as they become more and more involved in the fighting (Zack-Williams 2001). Male youths in a post-conflict setting, although they no longer have the direct power of the gun, indicate that they are not willing to go back to the pre-war situation 'now that our eyes are open'. But there are strong conservative forces at work which seek a return to the pre-war situation, which was often characterized by patrimonial rule by elders. Young women also seem to have been empowered by the effects of conflict. They often played an important role in managing the household, or they left the house in search of food and other goods while the men and boys hid inside, afraid of forced conscription or acts of revenge. Crucial questions are the extent to which pre-war authority figures (elders, chiefs, secret societies, patrons, etc.) have re-emerged and re-established the old modes of governance and social control, and the extent to which conflict resulted in a broad empowerment and emancipation of youth (for some evidence on Sierra Leone, see Archibald & Richards 2002).

*More research is needed on:*
- The extent to which the position of pre-war authorities has been damaged by war, and the extent to which they have been able to recover from war and to re-establish their grip on local communities.
- The factors which foster continuation of the process of youth emancipation following a war, and the ways that this emancipation can be carried further to prevent frustration.
- The impact on youth of the Western images (film, TV, etc.) that are exported to developing countries (cf. Richards 1996).

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***The voiceless speak up***
*G. is a village bordering RUF territory. It is 13 kilometres from the nearest road. In June 1996 the village was attacked by RUF units from the Kangari Hills in Tonkolili District, in retaliation against the increasingly effective operations being conducted by units of the CDF (civil defence force). Sixty people were slaughtered, and their bodies arranged in a line across the village. Wells were poisoned and houses were burnt. People started returning to the village in 1997. Indeed, some had never fled, but had hidden in caves and other 'corners' (the Mende word is* 'sokoihun'*). A humanitarian agency reached the village in 1999, bringing relief supplies. Several village elders had returned to help manage the distribution, and the village chief organized a meeting to discuss it. But his agenda was overruled by various women and youths who were determined that the injustices of earlier distributions would not be repeated. They told how 'corner dwellers' had survived on their own resources, cooking by night for fear of attracting rebel scouts. These people had supported the young men from the village who had trained as CDF fighters and secured the village site, making it possible for houses to be rebuilt and a large church/school to be built. At the meeting, a young man - a Temne tailor, suspected by the elders of being an RUF member - complained bitterly about his exclusion from the distribution lists. He had been one of those who had hidden in the 'corners'. The chief tried to make him sit down, but without success. 'Chief,' the young man said, 'you ran away, and were fed by the agencies as a displaced person, whereas I stood on this ground.....' This, he concluded, made him a citizen. Angered by the boy's 'arrogance', the chief threatened to withdraw from the meeting. He was prevailed upon to stay. But then the chief also began to speak frankly. 'Yes, it is true, the humanitarian inputs bring bitterness and division between us. But what can we do? It is natural to favour family and friends in the distribution of benefits. This brings division, and with division comes war. We need to find a better way.'* (Archibald & Richards 2002).

# Youth and conflict in the Great Lakes region

In the Great Lakes region, the issue of youth in a post-conflict situation is very relevant, posing a challenge to researchers and development agencies. (For overviews of conflicts in the Great Lakes region , see Doom and Gorus 2000.) Nevertheless, up to now no one has made an in-depth analysis of the precarious position of youth in these local societies. Action programmes tend to focus on the welfare and rehabilitation of street children, child prostitutes and child soldiers, rather than addressing the context from which these problems spring.

In eastern Congo, ongoing conflict makes serious research impossible. UNDP is starting a disarmament and demobilization programme (DDR) while several international organizations, including Save the Children and UNICEF, are focusing attention on child soldiers. The same international organizations and a number of local associations have developed programmes for children affected by the conflict in other ways. But again, these mainly focus on immediate issues and not so much on the context which generates youth vulnerability. Up to now, these programmes have conducted little or no significant research on the position of youth, or on the motivations that lie behind young people's enrolment in armed forces, rebel movements, irregular militias, etc.

In Rwanda the issue is a very sensitive one, especially with respect to child soldiers. The Rwandan government has shown some willingness to deal with the issue of demobilization and reintegration, but is not really promoting these processes for children who have been in the regular RPA (Rwandese Patriotic Army) army. Children from Interahamwe militias, including those who participated in the genocide, are dealt with in a reasonably open way. Street children and other socially distressed children receive a lot of attention, both from the social affairs ministry and from international and local NGOs, but up to now, in-depth research has not been at the top of the agenda. Local research capacities are present but as yet no meaningful research has been done on the position of the younger generations.

In Burundi, the first steps are being taken in the direction of carefully considered research and activities that approach the issue from a wider perspective. Up to now, however, despite the fact that many local associations are aware of the need for more research and for specific programmes for the war-affected younger generations, this awareness has not produced any meaningful research or activities. It must be acknowledged , of course, that the conflict is still going on in Burundi and the issue is a very sensitive one, although not as sensitive as in Rwanda.

A number of key issues are important to the study of youth in conflict and post-conflict situations. The first one regards the relationship between exclusion and the formation of militias.

## 1. The rise of rural militias
One of the most severe impacts of the current and recent conflicts in the Great Lakes region is the growing importance of rural militias, especially in the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) and Burundi[1] (Vlassenroot 2000). In local communities that are otherwise very

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[1] The first-generation militias in the DRC were a result of the growing willingness of marginalized youngsters and school drop-outs to form groups of under-aged combatants who opposed every representative of modern political authority and who were reacting to their own desperate feelings of exclusion, which they blamed on their political and social environment. Most of these youngsters felt betrayed by their own governments,

different from each other, there is evidence of a general tendency towards militia formation as an option to despair. Marginalized socially, more and more young people are persuaded by the mobilizing efforts of new local actors. Reducing the explanation of the current crisis to an ethnically underpinned message is generally sufficient to convince youngsters to join or form a militia. Banned from all political participation, excluded from education and economic development, young men are provided with a semblance of social integration and status when they join a militia.

To a certain extent, violence is turned into an attack on society itself. This results from a deeply rooted crisis of confidence in the principle that state institutions are accountable to society-at-large. In this sense, terror – however abject and cruel – is not so much random as exemplary, directed, and proportioned. The use of exemplary terror should be seen as a tool by which generations who have suffered the effects of educational collapse and social exclusion gain access to power. This is in contrast to the generations of young Zairians, Burundians and Rwandans, for example, who grew up in the seventies and early eighties and sought social integration through the creation of alternative structures that came to constitute the bulwark of civil society. In Rwanda and Burundi, politicians have been recruiting these marginalized youngsters since the early nineties. In eastern Congo, the frustration caused by exclusion is shared by a large number of young Congolese who are increasingly willing to act against what they perceive to be the root cause of the current crisis: i.e. the so-called Rwandan occupation of their province. Banned from any meaningful political participation, these young Africans are increasingly opting for violence as a strategy for achieving some semblance of social integration and some degree of access to benefits of the globalized world order. Militias, however, are not the only option. Joining the ranks of the national armies can also provide opportunities for achieving integration through violence.

Putting these militias into a historical and social perspective explains the extreme variability of the phenomenon in terms of both the way it is expressed and the amount of success it achieves. Three different but related dynamics are behind the formation of rural militias and the extreme differences between them. The first dynamic is the historical context. The two others are associated with the social and political context. Most of the militias are directly

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abandoned by international organizations and forgotten by the world. As they had nothing more to lose than their marginalization, rebellion became an option, both as a survival strategy and as a strategy of self-defence against a predatory political and social order. The shiftiness of their ideological basis and allies only further proved what these first militias were about: a search for alternatives to a situation of acute deprivation. Their strong proliferation in the most marginalized segments of society was additional evidence of this logic. Shared feelings of antipathy towards the '*Tutsi aggressors'* have only facilitated the creation of links between these diverse local groupings and other, foreign, factions of armed militia that are roaming the local countryside. Since August 1998 these militias have also attracted several political actors and social movements. The Kinshasa government, local politicians and civil society leaders try to strengthen their military or political position by mobilizing Mayi-Mayi leaders or by establishing their own militias.

Buyoya's minority government, which came under tremendous pressure, has continued to arm the militias of loyal communities throughout Burundi. The government has formed a force called the *'Gardiens de la Paix',* a sort of civil guard that carries certificates signed by the Minister of Defence. Some 6000 to 9000 unemployed youths and former – mainly FDD – rebels from the rural areas, particularly Makamba (some 2,000) and Ruyigi (some 6,000), have been given arms to act as auxiliaries to the military. Radio messages stressing the brutality of the rebellion towards its own people have been used to influence members to join. This new force is involved in military offensives and one day expects to be integrated into the army. Government authorities stressed, however, that close monitoring would be needed to ensure that this new force did not turn to banditry. In addition, more arms have been distributed to most of the inhabitants of Bujumbura. At the same time, various militia groups have mobilized Hutu youth from the countryside and the area around Bujumbura, and from the Burundian refugee camps in Tanzania. These militias have their bases in the DRC, where they have linked up with other militias. It is feared that in the context of increased economic stress the wide distribution of arms will have dangerous consequences.

associated with a particular ethnic background and are struggling to improve the position of their own community. At the same time, the formation of militias is a reaction to the effects of the existing patrimonial public order. Composed mainly of educational drop-outs (often because schools closed as a result of conflict) and socially excluded youngsters, rural militias are an opportunity to escape from further alienation. They are a kind of bottom-up violence against social and economic marginalization. Because the formation of militias is part of a social process that rejects the current institutional order and creates a rationality of its own, the militia is a very flexible phenomenon with shifting goals and objectives. The observation of Crummey (1985) might be useful as one explores the international research on youth and conflict situations: 'The real challenge is to see violence within its social setting, to appreciate its roots in social conflict, and to understand why and how people turn to it.'

## 2. Issues for research

At present we need a better understanding of how children and youth have been so affected by conflict and its context that they became child soldiers, child prostitutes or street children. We know little about how conflict affects youth (and society in general) socially, psychologically and economically. Thorough analysis of the reasons behind the behaviour of these specific groups, and of the way that conflict affects youth and its environment, can give direction to programmes aimed at facilitating the reintegration of war-affected youth into a society that has perhaps changed as a result of conflict. The following specific issues can be identified:

### 2.1 The impact of militias on social cohesion and authority structures

The present conflicts and the proliferation of armed militias is bringing about a shift in authority that favours those who are in charge of armed groups. Fierce competition between a new generation of militia leaders and the traditional authorities can be seen in many places. This is not a new phenomenon. Already in the 1960s, militia members were replacing traditional chiefs and becoming the new leaders of their own ethnic communities. Today some militia leaders have been even more successful, replacing traditional authorities to become the true leaders of the regions under their control. This shift in control is not limited to the leadership of communities but is also affecting lower levels of authority such as that exercised in families.

Militias are providing fighters with a renewed identity. Initiation rituals transform them into respected guards of their community while at the same time clearly severing all of their links with their former social environment. After being initiated, young fighters live in a totally new environment which is characterized by an order and authority structure that is different from those of their society of origin. Even if a rural population is supporting the activities of a militia, its members become alienated from their own families.

When being a rebel becomes a career option for many youngsters, the local economic order is seriously affected. In many parts of the Great Lakes region, militias are exploiting mining centres or controlling local trading networks that have traditionally been the basis of everyday life. To exploit these networks, the militias have to bring the population under their control and restrict its social mobility.

It is obvious that militias or armies are attractive to many of the region's youngsters, but what role does ideology play in all of this? Quite a number of the militias behave more like bandits than freedom fighters; others have genocidal philosophies as their main line of thinking; and some focus on security (of an ethnic group or country), territorial integrity or

anti-government politics. In this confusing environment, youngsters from the same family often fight on opposite sides, which suggests that they are interested not in ideology but in power or personal security. Or perhaps their affiliation is only coincidental.

## 2.2 Reintegration
Research has to focus on how to reintegrate those young people who opted for a career as rebel. The typical problems of ex-combatants – exclusion, poverty and criminality – can strongly reduce their chances for successful reintegration into society. More research is needed on how programmes to help them can best be implemented in the different countries of the Great Lakes region. It should be investigated how local political structures are dealing with reintegration . (See the case of Rwanda, where many demobilized combatants 'disappeared' after the start of the DRC conflict. Or see the regroupment in camps which has taken place in Burundi and the DRC.) Useful lessons can be derived from the experiences of Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Liberia. In many past operations, the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants have been hampered by poor funding, weak state structures, a climate of violence, and shrinking social structures. The demobilization of often traumatized former soldiers, and their reintegration into communities that are sometimes hostile, suspicious or frightened, has rarely proved to be straightforward. But the consequences of ineffective reintegration are considerable, both for the ex-combatants themselves and for society.

Some lessons can be drawn from a recent UNDP report on demobilization and reintegration in Rwanda. According to this report, the Rwandans have established a degree of authority and control and are successfully disarming and demobilizing Hutu groups and individuals in the Gisenyi and Ruhengeri D3 (Disarmament, Demobilization and Durable Solutions) camps. Most of these are young people. But the numbers being processed are relatively small, and those being disarmed do not seem to resist the process or to be spoilers intent on renewing conflict. Despite these efforts, there are fears that the authorities will not be able to cope with the increasingly large numbers of ex-combatants who might return if the current efforts bear fruit. The lessons of past operations, where reintegration was not factored into D3 or only added later, need to be heeded. Resettlement activities have been described as being broadly satisfactory but few activities have been implemented in support of reintegration. It is particularly critical that the process of reintegration begins early. The process of rehabilitating Hutu youth militias will be of primary concern. Various external organizations are already involved in planning this, but up to now there has been no specific research to pave the way. As Hutu individuals and groups are placed in communities, sensitization initiatives will be required. Communities that have established a degree of peaceful co-existence will fear that returning young combatants will resort to criminality or will bring retribution or trouble. With the prospect of possible new influxes of armed groups into Rwandan camps, consideration should also be given to research on how demobilizing soldiers can be productively assisted, trained and employed so that they can be reintegrated into the Rwandan economy and society.

## 2.3 The role of social services
The availability of social services, in particular health and education, is an important factor influencing the behaviour of youth. When we were speaking with some demobilized child soldiers in the Congo in 1999, we were told they had joined the Mayi-Mayi immediately after the school in their village was closed. The combination of abject poverty – caused mainly by the effects of the war – and idleness was a less attractive prospect for these children than joining the militia. It would be useful to conduct research that identifies exactly how the effects of a conflict on young people are influenced by the availability and quality of social services in war-torn societies and by poverty.

**2.4 HIV/AIDS**
This is an important issue throughout Africa, but for child soldiers and other young people affected by conflict (including young prostitutes, street children, and children in households headed by a woman or a child), this disease is even more of a threat than it is for others. Specific research is required to identify the particular features of the disease's spread among young people in a conflict situation, and the impact of the disease in a post-conflict situation (see above).

## Scope for comparative approaches

As noted in the introduction, young people are always heavily involved in and affected by war. This report has focused mainly on two regions of conflict in Africa where it can be argued that the war is especially strongly influenced by, and may be largely a product of, the disaffection and social exclusion of youth. These are regions where a distinctive 'sub-politics' of youth seems to lead to the formation of armed groups such as the RUF in Sierra Leone and the Mayi-Mayi militias in eastern Congo, where fighting becomes a means of livelihood for young people who are especially impoverished and underprivileged . The literature struggles to find suitable terminology to describe such movements, and Hobsbawm's venerable term 'social banditry' might be preferable to the derogatory 'lumpen violence' of Abdullah (1997) or the 'pseudo-guerrillas' of Nilsson (1993), although Africanists in the past have found the term less than ideal (cf. Crummey 1985). An element of 'social banditry' is probably found in all current and recent African conflicts, but it is a matter for further comparative analysis to discover how important in any given situation this element is, and to determine the degree to which it is driven by alienated youth who are acting as free agents.

The terms of reference for this report called for some consideration of the situations in Angola and Mozambique. Which lessons can be derived from these, and what scope might there be for systematic comparison with the other two cases (the Mano River region and the Great Lakes region)? The first immediate difference is that independence in both Angola and Mozambique led to Marxist regimes, and the conflicts in both countries began as Cold War struggles by proxy. The war in Mozambique was further complicated by Rhodesian and South African counter-insurgency as these countries fought to stem nationalist guerrilla movements aimed at ending white minority rule. But if the Cold War and counter-insurgency created Renamo in Mozambique and UNITA in Angola, any thought that these movements might collapse with the end of the Cold War and the political changes in Zimbabwe and South Africa were soon dashed.

With hindsight, it can be seen that once the militia infrastructure for such movements is in place, the movements tend to perpetuate themselves indefinitely. Although Renamo and UNITA both represent regional and ethnic political grievances against state regimes, much of their longevity can be explained by the enforced recruitment of cadres in war-damaged rural areas where young people have few other viable options. In this respect Renamo and UNITA have proven to be precursors of trends that are now also well established in the other two regions we have considered (Dolan and Schafer 1997, cf. Geffray 1990, Dinerman 1994, Wilson 1992). Secondly, UNITA perhaps provides the single clearest example of a war indefinitely prolonged by 'greed, not grievance', and by ready access to a valuable resource, in this case diamonds (Le Billon 2000). An important difference between Renamo and UNITA lies in the attitude of the international community. Peace negotiators (led by the Catholic Church) and the international community worked hard to devise an exit strategy for Renamo in Mozambique. But the international community lost patience with Angola after several aborted peace agreements, and in effect 'criminalized' UNITA, denying it any political exit strategy (Shaw 2001). The exit strategy in Mozambique included working out a deal on demobilization that although controversial – some people saw it as rewarding violence – seems to have been largely effective in ending the war; 74,710 fighters were disarmed and reintegrated, of which 22 per cent were Renamo fighters, and 1.5 per cent were female combatants (Dolan & Shafer 1997).

A key lesson from this seems to be that denying militia groups the space they need to develop their political ambitions and claims - especially in regions rich in diamonds and other similarly valuable and easily acquired minerals - necessarily courts the risk of a descent into near-permanent banditry. Some analysts considered the 're-politicization' of UNITA, and governance reforms, to be the prerequisites for any lasting peace (Shaw 2001), although any attempts to this effect may have been greatly complicated by the death in combat of the long-established leader of UNITA, Jonas Savimbi. A difficulty with the 're-politicization' strategy is that it arouses the ire not only of parties on the ground (notably the government of the day) but also of those analysts who adhere to the state-centric model of war (whether in its European 'realist' or American 'idealist' variant). Movements staffed by 'lumpens' and 'bandits' ought not to be allowed the respect due to 'proper' political movements, most especially when the 'lumpens' are ill-educated youths 'of no account'.

The complaint is often heard that translating the demands of groups like Renamo and the RUF into a recognizable language of political grievance is simply to dress such movements in 'borrowed clothes'. Interestingly, 'borrowed clothes' – or rather a decent change of clean clothes – was one of the first demands made by the RUF leadership before they would engage in the Abidjan peace process (1995-96). The movement's 'war council' was explicit that it feared being patronised by the well educated lawyers in smart suits who would negotiate for the government. If this seems childish, it also tells us something about the emphasis on dress code among modern youth.

Intellectuals in the Sierra Leonean diaspora make considerable play of the fact that the RUF's main 'propaganda' document (RUF/SL 1995) for the Abidjan process was 'ghost-written' by agents of the conflict-resolution agency International Alert. (But readers of the memoirs of sports heroes know that the presence of a ghost writer does not necessarily make a story untrue. It only makes its rendering more attractive or coherent.)

But getting to the real 'sub-politics' of these kinds of conflicts is a hazardous task. The ground is littered with 'brokers' who are quick to telephone radio stations or approach academics claiming to represent movements such as the RUF or groups like the Mayi-Mayi (Vlassenroot 2002). The young people running these movements on the ground are often very poor, have little education and are deeply distrustful of outside negotiators. They prefer to preserve their silence or let their deeds – at times deeply paranoid and socio-pathic distortions of schoolyard ideas regarding discipline and rough justice (Richards 2002a) – speak for them.

The real basis for a truly comparative approach to youth abduction and youth-driven movements like the RUF, Renamo and the Mayi-Mayi will be a better grasp of the process of socialization and the internal dynamics of militia bands. Only when peace-makers are armed with this information will it be possible to map out alternatives for the young people in question – options other than a retreat into the enclave and the indefinite pursuit of angry, 'Terminator'-like violence. Youth-oriented social movements of violence, such as the RUF, are too dangerous to be left to their own paranoid devices.

# Conclusion

War is a catalyst for changing  attitudes, and perhaps more for young people than for any other group in society.  After 11 years of war, young people in Sierra Leone say they are now 'aware' (Shepler 2002).  This awareness is a two-edged sword.  For some, it means a greater consciousness of human rights, and rejection of corrupt and undemocratic leaders; for others it means a greater knowledge of the basic modalities of armed rebellion (Archibald & Richards 2002).  The conflict in Sierra Leone is probably typical of most African conflicts.  Despite demobilization, weapons have been stashed and security experts think that the RUF – or a movement like it – could re-form and become operational within a matter of weeks.  Unless political reforms are deep and lasting, leading to a better deal for the deeply impoverished younger generation, war will return to Sierra Leone.  Already it is stirring elsewhere in the region. (The rebellion in Cote d'Ivoire and renewed fighting in Liberia are ominous portents).  The term 'post-conflict situation' is therefore a relative term.

We have shown in this review that there is a considerable body of literature on youth and violence in Africa.  The most immediate problems of post-war transition have been analysed.  There are theories on the subject and action has been taken, mainly in the context of the DDR (Demobilization, Demilitarization and Reintegration) process.  But we were asked also to comment on the obvious gaps in the theories and research.  What would be most advantageous to know or understand?

There is one message that stands out above all others.  We need to have a better overall grasp of the kinds of wars occurring in Africa.  We need a  better model and a better framing of the issues.  Examination of the wars in Angola and Mozambique provides some important clues.  It is clear that for many years these wars have not been well understood, due to the fact that neither case fitted the accepted theoretical models for legitimate guerrilla struggle.  The frustrated hopes of a radical international intelligentsia played a part, and the literature includes its share of bitter denunciation as a result.  But now that the debates in Europe and North America have been drained of much of their left-right passion, there is a certain weary acceptance of worst-case accounts of 'new' African conflicts (Kaplan 1994, 1996).  The academic community's old partisan scepticism during the Cold War, which properly challenged rumours of wars and massacres, has been replaced by a moral indignation that is quick to condemn, if slower to check the facts.

We would conclude that the most obvious need is for a return to a painstaking, sceptical, scholarly analysis of militia movements and guerrilla wars as social projects.  But for those who try to write about youth and war in terms that are largely empirical and analytical, a propitious intellectual climate is lacking.  Scholarship is caught between a post-structuralism that no longer believes in empiricism (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992) and denunciations that hide political interests.  Those who aspire to 'neutral' research will need some protection from colleagues bent on uncovering not intellectual objection but moral defect.

Much has been written about groups such as the RUF and Mayi-Mayi, but much of it is speculation.  Until this changes, little progress will be made drawing such groups back into a wider, more inclusive, more peaceful discussion about social ills.  It is hard to get close to groups like the Mayi-Mayi and RUF while a conflict situation is going on.  But recently concluded wars could offer real opportunities for research on the impact that conflict has youth, and on how young people's social energies might be harnessed for more peaceful purposes.  Mozambique is the most obvious example, and already there is a striking body of

non-partisan research data in print. But Sierra Leone would seem to offer equally good opportunities. See, for example, the special issue of the journal *Politique Africaine*, December 2002, which contains two valuable papers on the role of youth in militias formed during the recently concluded conflict (Ferme & Hoffman 2002, Shepler 2002). Systematic comparison of the two cases seems an obvious step to take. Such research might focus on militia recruitment and the socialization of cadres, and on how groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses in Mozambique (Wilson 1992) and the unarmed urban civil-defence groups in Bo, Sierra Leone, (Richards 1996) avoid militarization. The current peace in Sierra Leone offers possibilities for first-hand, detailed ethnographic work on the RUF during its years of bush incarceration. This could be comparable to Schafer's 'revisionist' studies of Renamo in the field (Schafer 2001). This work has already challenged some assumptions. It has been found, for example, that compared with conscripts to the government army, significantly more Renamo cadres knew why they were fighting (Dolan & Schafer 1997). Recent work by Peters (2002) indicates a higher level of ideological awareness among RUF cadres than had previously been assumed Abdullah and Muana 1997). Such analysis might greatly enhance international understanding of war as 'social pathology' and it might suggest better ways of handling the otherwise apparently intractable 'sub-politics' of such groups.

It would also be appropriate to focus very carefully on the modalities and lessons of the 'successful' peace processes in the two countries (perhaps compared with parallel failures in Angola, cf. Shaw 2001). Things certainly went better in Sierra Leone once the government abandoned its ambition to wipe out the RUF, and once UN forces undertook appropriate confidence-building measures that were based on an understanding of how a lack of exit options had contributed to RUF paranoia (Richards 2001).

Any such major comparative effort to understand African conflicts involving youth, and the peace-making efforts associated with them, would be most appropriately undertaken by a team that offers a leading role to young researchers from the country in question who have experienced the conflict first-hand. It would also be helpful, however, to bring in researchers from other conflict zones and to give roles to diaspora intellectuals and to mentors who have a wider, comparative experience of youth issues.

It should be understood that the phenomenon of war in Africa has remote causes as well as proximate causes. 'Democratization' is not the only way to address these remote causes. Some attention will also have to be given to the forced division of labour from which so much youth frustration in Africa flows. In the end, it may be that the violent youth crisis in Africa will begin to find a resolution only when regional labour markets in Africa are opened up and free movement is allowed, and when other EU countries follow the current British lead and look seriously at Green Card schemes for international migrant labour.

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Appendix 1

# Local research capacities and needs

It is understood that there is a great need for knowledge because of the 'de-skilling of society' that has taken place. Among its many other devastating effects, conflict has a severe impact on a country's much-needed intellectual capacity. Not only have schools and training institutions been destroyed and many young people forced to drop out of school, but educated people are prominent among the refugees who seek asylum in other countries. Local research capacities in post-war countries are therefore limited. Many leading intellectuals have fled, mainly to other African countries where they can find academic work (notably South Africa), or to the North (mainly the US) where many remain active in research and willing to return home, at least for the purpose of fieldwork. People with research skills and training do remain on the ground, however, often in surprising numbers, though many of them work (at least part-time) for one of the numerous NGOs or international organizations rather than in a university or other research institution. The revival of research capacities in war-torn countries is an important issue, though it tends to find itself low down on donor priorities. There is, however, a good argument for saying that research on an issue such as youth in post-conflict situations might be the appropriate catalyst around which to try to revive and reform local research capacity.

### 1. Rwanda
In Rwanda there is a general lack of research on the position of youth in the present (and former) Rwandan society. The main reasons are the sensitivity surrounding some groups of children – child soldiers in particular – and the fact that most of the persons working with children and youth are focused on a particular programme or purpose. This makes it extremely difficult to identify local individuals or institutions who are doing research on the position of youth in Rwandan society. On issues other than child soldiers, a lot of information has been collected and is probably available from the various local and international organizations that are working with groups of children.

Research capacities (not exhaustive):
*Centre for Conflict Management* of the National University of Rwanda (located in Butare);
*IWACU* and *INADES* are institutes with years of experience doing research on a variety of development issues in Rwanda.

### 2. Burundi
Research in Burundi has shown that the dynamics of exclusion and intensified economic and political competition have seriously affected the position of the younger generation. As a consequence, Burundian youth were increasingly attracted by the recruitment campaigns of the government and militia groups and opted for a strategy of violence.

As yet, Burundi does not have any disarmament and demobilization programmes, nor are any envisaged for the near future. Nevertheless, an increasing number of non-governmental agencies are trying to initiate activities that will give them a better understanding of the precarious position of youth, and will suggest ways that could help the agencies to improve the position of these youngsters. It has to be acknowledged, however, that most of their programmes deal with the issue of ethnicity and try to reduce the gap between communities rather than focusing on the broader aspects of the relationship between conflict and youth.

Research capacities (not exhaustive):
*Université de Bujumbura.*
*Défense des Enfants International Burundi* carried out a study on the impact of the Burundian conflict on local youth.
*International Alert* has done some research, in collaboration with local partners, on the relationship between access to education and the conflict.

### 3. Eastern Congo
Similarly, little attention has been given to the role of dispossessed youth in eastern Congo who are searching for ways to achieve at least a modicum of status in a social landscape that has become much more fluid and unpredictable. In contrast to the 1980s, when development associations offered a survival option, a growing number of youngsters today are opting for a strategy of violence and are strongly affected by a generalized context of conflict and war.

As the conflict is still going on, the number of local research activities and programmes dealing with the younger generations seems to be very small. Nevertheless, in quantitative terms, the Kivu provinces of Congo could have more research capacity than either Rwanda or Burundi. The quality of this capacity is generally

dubious, however. The Congo had a relatively good education system in the past but since the 1990s it has eroded, and many of the country's good researchers are currently working in foreign institutions.

Research capacities ( not exhaustive):
*Centre Universitaire de Bukavu*. The Faculty of Social and Political Sciences has some research activities on youth and conflict.
*Université Graben*. This university is situated in Butembo and appears to have a reasonably developed research capacity and certainly an interest in conflict-related issues.
*Centre Universitaire de Kisangani (Branche de Goma)*. As for Université Graben.
*POLE Institute*. This intercultural institute, located in Goma, has research activities on the effects of war, the crisis of legitimacy, war economies, etc. There are no activities on youth and conflict but the institute has the capacity for such activities.
*The Life & Peace Institute, the University of Ghent and the University of Uppsala*. These institutions are currently collaborating on a joint research programme in the Kivu provinces. The programme will be imbedded in a conflict transformation programme and will build on earlier research done by the three partners. Youth and conflict is likely to be included as a subject in the research programme.

## 4. Sierra Leone
Sierra Leone has a long history of education. The first higher education institution, Fourah Bay College , was founded in 1827. The country has a sizeable scholarly community, but much of it is now based in the diaspora. Locally based scholars are often young and have missed out on opportunities for research training. Some have good practical research experience, however, working for NGO projects in monitoring and evaluation teams, for example. The two university colleges continue to function, even though researchers have been starved of literature because of the war. Even literature on the conflict itself is in short supply, although Freetown newspapers have occasionally reproduced selected items or e-mail debates. There are ongoing projects to rehabilitate and rehouse the university departments. Njala, an up-country campus, was abandoned after the fighting in 1995, but the site is not heavily damaged and could be rehabilitated. Junior staff and some agricultural researchers have returned. Many university researchers double as consultants for NGO programmes.

Research capacities (not exhaustive):
*Fourah Bay College* is the oldest higher education establishment in the country, with quite a strong background in social sciences and the humanities. The Institute of African Studies is the designated contact point for overseas scholars who conduct research. Younger and less well qualified staff have filled vacancies over the last ten years as more established figures have left the country. There is both a strong need for research training and a strong interest in studying the war and its aftermath.
*Njala University Colleg*e does teaching and research in agriculture and education. Its research capacity is not strong, but there are some social scientists who are interested in issues related to the youth crisis.

## 5. Liberia
Research capacities (not exhaustive):
*University of Liberia* is located in Monrovia, opposite the statehouse. Although it has had a reasonably well developed capacity for academic research, the present political climate places serious limitations on research activities. If the political climate changes, this university would be a serious partner.
*Cuttington University College* is located in the middle of country, close to Gbarnga , the capital of Taylor's former 'Greater Liberia'. Before the war it trained many students in the social sciences , economics and other fields. Following a slow recovery after the war, the latest fighting has left the college ransacked and abandoned.
*Third World Consultancy*. The authors do not have much information about this consultancy, but it was mentioned by reliable sources as a possible research partner.

Appendix 2

# Potential users of research

**Government and political parties**
Much depends on the goodwill and accountability of the government. (Liberia would be more problematic than Sierra Leone, for instance.) The capacity of governments, almost by definition, is limited in post-war settings. Sierra Leone has ministries of Social Welfare, Gender & Children Affairs, of Education, Science & Technology, and of Youth and Sports. These would all be potential users of research on youth. The same is true for the social affairs ministries in the three countries of the Great Lakes region.

The democratic process in Sierra Leone brought into being a Young People's Party for the 2002 elections, and the RUF also competed on a platform reflecting some of its distinctively youth-oriented political concerns. It is worth noting that Mrs Zainab Bangura was only one of several candidates who sought to represent the concerns and interests of women. None of these made any electoral showing, but they were the first stirrings of a concern to provide for the political representation of women. These candidates and parties might be interested in research findings concerning the role of young men and women in post-war Sierra Leone.

**NGOs, the UN and the EU**
In general, NGOs have a particular interest in the concrete outcomes of research, such as training manuals, workshops, evaluations, lessons learnt, etc. The UN, the EU and other donors are more interested in well-executed research that helps them to formulate policy and identify new priorities. UNICEF and the Post-Conflict Group at the World Bank are obvious first points of contact.

**Civil society (including the young people themselves)**
If war represents or exacerbates an inter-generational crisis in Africa, then the institutions of civil society (religious organizations, sports and welfare associations, and the like) will need to be involved in the search to frame a 'new deal'. Some of these organizations already take an active part in brainstorming, for example regarding local applications of the UN convention on the rights of the child. In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Christian Councils have been active in the debate on peace-building and the empowerment of marginalized groups, including youth and ex-combatants. In general, there is a tendency to involve the Islamic organizations less than should be the case in these debates. This reflects the bias of some of the donors. The civil defence movement in Sierra Leone has produced its own ex-combatants' organization, which has good ideas on rehabilitation and integration. Teachers and youth organizers (e.g. football coaches) were strongly represented. They are a category of professionals who could make good use of research findings. They could also be involved in research activities directly.

**1. Great Lakes region**
Organizations that are operational in all three of the countries discussed in this paper include:
*Save the Children* - probably the organization with the largest capacity to participate in meaningful data collection and research. This organization works both with grassroots organizations and with social affairs ministries, for example, and as a result has access to a lot of valuable information. Save the Children has already done some research on the subjects of child soldiers, unaccompanied minors, street children and HIV/AIDS, while it has operational programmes for all these subjects. Save the Children has offices in all three countries.
*UNICEF* - another major player, but its research capacity is probably less than Save the Children. UNICEF's relationship with local organizations is more superficial and the information this organization collects should be treated with some caution
*The World Bank* - an organization that collects a lot of information, including on child soldiers, but the data should be handled with caution.
*CECI* (Centre Canadien d'Etude et de Cooperation Internationale) - an NGO with a conflict transformation programme in Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Congo. CECI works with between three and five local partners in each country; some are youth associations. CECI, in combination with its associates, could be a valuable partner in a research programme on youth and conflict in the Great Lakes region. The regional head office is in Kigali.
*Ministries of Social Affairs* in these three countries are not active in the field of research but, in collaboration with partners, have access to much relevant information. For the most part these ministries take their work seriously, and would probably be open to the idea of taking part in research programmes.

**Rwanda**
Some programmes dealing with youth-related issues:
*GTZ:* vocational training for former child soldiers

*Rwandan Government demobilization programme*
*UNDP demobilization programme*
*Dozens of local associations* have developed programmes focusing on specific groups of youth and children, including those affected by war.  Programmes for street children and for youth affected by HIV/AIDS are probably the most common.

**Burundi**
Some programmes dealing with youth:
*Youth Project - Search for Common Ground,* in collaboration with the local youth movement JAMAA, aims at helping young people to discuss with each other the choices they have been making and why they opted for violence.  Several activities help them to discuss the impact of conflict on their position and situation.
*Ligue Iteka* (Human Rights Association) has expressed interest in research on youth and conflict, and said in a telephone interview that it has taken the first steps in this direction.
*Numerous local associations* (as for Rwanda).

**Eastern Congo**
Some programmes dealing with youth:
*Diobass Ecologie et Société;*
The partners from CECI: *COJESKI* (South Kivu youth platform)**,** *ADEPAE***,** etc.

**2. Sierra Leone**
Organizations and programmes with a specific interest in youth and the war include:
*Action Aid*.  This NGO has a long-standing interest in children and youth, and runs a 'youth in crisis project' aimed at generating employment in urban areas for young people who are potentially vulnerable to militia recruitment.  The country director - a Sierra Leonean national - has a strong academic background and might be a major player in coordinating some new youth-oriented research activities.
*CARE*. A major international NGO with a long history in Sierra Leone (since 1961) focusing on rural development issues.  With inputs from Steve Archibald (CARE-UK) and Paul Richards (Wageningen University), CARE has recently developed a 'rights-based agriculture project' (RBA) designed to articulate and address some of the grievances rural people - including rural youth - believe caused the war.  It has well-qualified local staff with research interests and capabilities.  Some years ago the assistant manager of the RBA project wrote a valuable master's thesis on 'problem-oriented' curriculum reform for rural secondary schools as a way to help address the 'youth crisis' (Mokuwa 1997).  Monitoring and evaluation staff recently carried out a base-line survey for RBA on the impact and understanding of the conflict in rural areas of the centre of the country.  Consultant Steve Archibald recently drafted an outline proposal for a 'youth works project' designed to link employment opportunities for youth to rural post-war rehabilitation needs (Archibald 2002).
*Conciliation Resources*. A small UK-based conflict-resolution agency that has been working on local peace strengthening in Sierra Leone since 1995.  It soon identified the 'youth crisis' issue as a key focus, and drafted a proposal later taken up and modified by Action Aid.  Its own plans were hampered by the donor ban on Sierra Leone in 1997, but the Sierra Leone-born, London-based manager of the country programme later established a successful 'drop-in' centre for ex-combatants in Kenema.  Some of the local staff are experienced researchers on the war, though as yet lacking in formal research training. (One has worked as a research assistant in at least three major external academic projects on the war.)  CR is particularly strong in having links not only to militia groups (via its Kenema centre) but also to various national NGOs working in the peace and rights sector.
*(NC)DDR* The government programme for demobilization.  It is directed by a PhD social scientist with wide experience of rural development issues.  He could be a research partner for work on ex-combatants.
*Governance Reform Secretariat*.  Funded by British aid, this project advises the government about the reform of administrative structures.  Its main project to date has been a series of consultations on the causes of the war at chiefdom level throughout southern and eastern Sierra Leone.  The aim is to mobilize youth to rebuild houses for 'paramount chiefs' who are returning to administer their chiefdoms.  The youth issue has figured extensively in these consultations. GRS staff are mainly locally hired consultants from the university sector.  Several have research competence.
*Ministries of social welfare, youth, sports and education*.  There are potential partners - some with research experience - in all of these ministries.  The vocational section of the Ministry of Education might be an especially important point of contact.
*War Child Holland* is rather new in Sierra Leone but is increasing its capacity rapidly.  It is focusing on the psycho-social well-being of children in general and of ex-child soldiers in particular, by using creative therapies.

**3. Liberia**
Some programmes dealing with youth:

*SCF Liberia* is running a large programme in Liberia on a) Social Welfare, b) Health, and c) Livelihoods. It played an important role in the DDR process, providing Interim Care Centres for former child combatants and running the Family Tracing and Reunification network in the country. They have an interest in action-oriented research.

*Don Bosco Liberia,* together with SCF-Liberia, is the biggest organization dealing with youth. While it ran several ICCs straight after the war, presently it is more involved in street children shelters. It also has a large vocational skills training programme in the capital and has promoted youth football teams throughout the country, which also act as a child community monitoring system.

*GTZ*: vocational training and farming skills training for ex-combatants and ordinary youth.

# Abstracts of some key literature

Former child soldiers

**A. B. Zack-Williams 2001. Child soldiers in the civil war in Sierra Leone.** *Review of African Political Economy* **87:73-82.** The author says that the causes of war in Sierra Leone—economic mismanagement, a lack of political and economic transparency, corruption, the social exclusion of young people, etc.—cannot by themselves fully account for the large number of child soldiers. He argues that it is necessary to assess the social, political, ideological and material conditions which have prompted children to join social movements which are challenging the ruling elite for control of the state. The super-exploitative nature of imperialism (…) has led to uneven development and the inability of local social institutions such as the family to cope with the exigencies of life within peripheral capitalist formations. It is a myth that the 'extended family' has an elastic capacity for coping. The coping strategies—such as wardship and fostering—in fact sometimes leave children in very exploitative situations (cf. Bledsoe, 1990). The street life led by many street children nurtured the qualities needed for a life in combat.

**Alcinda Honwana 1999. Negotiating post-war identities: child soldiers in Mozambique and Angola.** *Codesria Bulletin* **1 & 2, 4-13.** The author stresses the importance of local cultural understandings of war trauma in post-conflict processes of healing, reconciliation and social reintegration in Africa. The issue of child soldiers can be approached from different perspectives: psychological, human rights, anthropological, sociological, etc. After a war, demobilized youth combatants continue to be vulnerable. They have no skills, no jobs, and no education. To survive they have little choice but to reintegrate into rural areas where they were already marginalized before the war and now have become only more marginalized. The author notes that Western conceptions of childhood and child development place childhood in opposition to adulthood, with children seen as 'people in the process of becoming rather than being' (James, 1993). Childhood is taken to be a natural and universal phase of human existence, shaped more by biological and psychological factors than by social factors (Freeman 1993). But the author argues that childhood is a social construction and cannot be understood in universal terms. Because children in Africa have to take part in productive activities and become materially self-reliant, they become 'adults' at a young age. The process of becoming soldiers and part of a rebel movement generally begins either with a direct encounter between the rebels and the children's families, or with the mediation of local chiefs. One of the purposes of military training and initiation is to brainwash the conscripts and make them lose their previous identity. Michel de Certeau makes an important distinction between strategies and tactics. He sees strategies as having long-term consequences or benefits, and tactics as providing the means to cope with concrete circumstances, even though those means are likely to have deleterious long-term consequences. Using De Certeau's distinction, one could say that young combatants use 'tactics' for making the best of the military environment in which they are forced to operate. [*The discussion in the book on whether or not children can make rational decisions contains a useful argument. Children might not be as good as adults at making strategies, but they surely make tactics. To survive a war it might be more useful to be a good tactician than a good strategist.*] In Mozambique, the isolation of former child soldiers in Interim Care Centres so that they could be given psychological counselling proved unsuccessful because the young people were completely removed from their communities and cultural environment and were asked to talk about painful memories, as a way of healing. Post-war identities are negotiated and constructed through cleansing rites which are performed by many families in order to purify and protect their relatives from the atrocities of war. The Cartesian dichotomy which separates body and mind cannot be applied, as individuals are seen holistically as body and mind together, and as part and parcel of a collective body.

Youth violence in Africa

**Ali El-Kenz 1996. 'Youth and violence', in Stephen Ellis, ed.,** *Africa's new people, policies and institutions.* **DGIS.** El-Kenz examines the sometimes casual and unintended way that urban youths get involved in violence: by joining a demonstration, for example. Depending on the outcome, wounded and dead youth can be turned into martyrs and heroes or into vandals and criminals. A youth working on the street in an urban centre is most likely part of gang. The main enemy of the gangs is the police. These urban youths are neither formal-sector employees nor political militants, but anonymous workers in the informal sector. Young people are often used by power-seekers, but they are also used by people in power for what is called 'manipulated violence'. In general the state is not regarded as owned by the people. And in the aftermath of the disruption of the state, the fabric of society itself begins to decay. The major patronage systems which developed around high-ranking government officials are split into as many fiefs as there are centres of power. Sometimes whole sectors of the

central bureaucracy organize themselves like a criminal mafia around a leader, who may be a former minister, a general, etc. (…), with the whole network depending on some sort of economic activity and deriving its income from a specific area of monopoly. Youth destabilize society, frighten the middle class, and reinforce—if not justify—dictatorships. On the subject of education, El-Kenz reports that in Africa only two persons are employed for each school-going child, while in developed countries the ratio is 5 to 1. The educational situation can therefore be characterized as poor, with delays in the payment of teachers' salaries, too many pupils to a class, and few teaching materials. Demographically speaking, there is an increase in youth while the economy declines. Socio-economic frustrations turn the spirit of rebellion that is normal for young people into hatred, violence and nihilism. The author also raises the point that frustration is aggravated by compatriots who have got rich quickly, and by imaginations which feed on television, radio and cinema. 'It should be emphasized that the quasi-politicized form of violence which is growing in African societies, and in which a large proportion of the youth of these countries can be engaged, could turn quite soon into a third form of violence which will threaten the stability of other parts of the world. All that is required for these groups to become internationalized is for the dissemination of local violence linked to the collapse of the state to extend beyond national frontiers to other regions.' Economic opportunities for this are numerous—in the drugs and arms trades, for example—but Islamic fundamentalism and the movement of migrant labour are also contributing factors.

**Yusuf Bangura 1997. Understanding the political and cultural dynamics of the Sierra Leone war: a critique of Paul Richards' 'Fighting for the rain forest'.** *Africa Development*, **Vol. XXII, Nos. 3 / 4.** The author argues that it is important to differentiate among youth in terms of their strata: some are completely excluded (lumpens); others, although disadvantaged, remain socially integrated in the community and the family institutions that guarantee social accountability. According to Bangura, youths were never part of patrimonial networks and could therefore not suffer from their collapse. Why, he wonders, has the majority of youth, including those in desperately poor situations, not joined the military or rebel movement?

**D. Everatt and E. Sisulu, eds., 1992.** *Black youth in crisis facing the future.* **Ravan Press.** This books contains four articles dealing with youth in South Africa. A number of the observations made in these articles are relevant here. Just getting young people back in school will not solve the explosive crisis in education. Youth in conflict (in this case youth who took part in South Africa's struggle for freedom) have often been radical, challenging all forms of control and promoting some form of 'people power'. Youth movements are often more successful in urban areas than in rural areas. Older youths are more difficult to discipline and it is not enough merely to appeal to their idealism. Political movements and/or gangs offered an alternative to family life and to school. Youths join gangs as a survival tactic. Because the young people took a stand and were active in the conflict at a time when the older generation was paralysed with fear, the young people lost respect for their elders. As the youth became accustomed to power, family relations changed. When the ANC and PAC re-entered daily political life, they relegated youth to the sidelines, which led to frustration. The joint efforts to achieve freedom also created an economy of affection, and feelings of solidarity with extended family members, peers, homeboys, comrades, political groups, etc.

Demobilization and reintegration programmes

**Irma Specht & Carlien van Empel 1998.** *Enlargement: a challenge for social and economic reintegration: targeting ex-combatants or all war-affected people? The Liberia experience.* **ILO, Geneva.** The authors report that the labour-intensive construction of public works is extremely effective in a post-war situation. *[But what happens to workers when the project stops and they no longer have money in their pockets?]* The question of whom to include in post-war programmes (only ex-combatants or—through a variety of measures—everyone) is in the end a political issue. If possible, the larger strategy should be chosen. In any case, three questions should be answered before efforts are focused solely on ex-combatants:
- Are the ex-combatants a homogeneous group with special needs?
- Does focusing on them contribute to achieving lasting peace?
- Does focusing on them contribute to national reconciliation?

Reintegration is often not very appropriate: where are the communities where reintegration should take place? The authors say that younger former child combatants are easily accepted by the community, but older ones run away because the village has nothing to offer them and they are used to freedom. The authors also conclude that former child combatants prefer urban areas and eventually become urbanized. They make several recommendations regarding vocational training for ex-combatants in Liberia: 1) training cycles should be short; 2) skills should be taught mainly for rural non-farm activities; 3) new methodologies for illiterates should be developed; and 4) it is better to collaborate with NGOs rather than with established formal training institutes. Young returnees should be involved in post-war reconstruction programmes. Disabled ones should be dealt

with in the mainstream.  The extent to which post-war situations can be compared depends, among other things, on the nature of the conflict and the degree to which it is structured.  It is said that on average, ten per cent of refugees stay in the host country after a conflict has ended.  What do we know about this?


Employment

**Janet MacGaffey 1992. Solving the problems of urban living: opportunities for youth in the second economy. In *Les jeunes en Afrique* eds. H. D'Ameida-Topor, O. Goerg, C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, F. Guitart.**  The second economy, in which the majority of urban youth are involved, is forming a growing part of the formal economy.  It includes small-scale enterprises in the informal sector. (In Africa's large towns and capital cities, one-quarter to one-half of the active population is involved in this.)  The economic activities of youth are often in the form of apprenticeships, which in many countries offer an alternative to inadequate programmes of education and vocational training.  MacGaffey reports that many apprentices also learn how to read and write and do bookkeeping.  Parents pay small fees for their children to be accepted as apprentices.  Most apprentices have only primary education. [*This profile exactly matches the situation of post-war youth.]* Besides these small-scale enterprises, the second economy includes illegal activities, such as unlicensed trade and smuggling.  Because these are so profitable, even highly educated youth are involved in them. Cf. De Soto 1989: 234 ('The Other Path: the invisible Revolution in the Third World'): 'The most discriminatory laws and institutions are those governing economic activities – the main channel for upward mobility. The resulting frustration, at best, gives rise to informal activity; at worst, to criminality and subversion.'


Trauma and trauma counselling

**Sakui W.G. Malakpa 1994. The role of special education and rehabilitation in post-war resettlement and reconstruction: the case of Liberia. *Liberian Studies Journal*, XIX, 1**  The author reviews the discussion [*in a non-critical way*] of the post-traumatic stress disorders found among former war combatants (Helzer, Robins & McEvoy, 1987) as well as among victims of war (Farhood & Day, 1986), and concludes that, as found in Beirut (Farhood & Day, 1986) and in Latin America (Bendfeldt-Zachrisson, 1988) such conditions require long-term counselling, rehabilitation and therapy.  The author draws attention to the large number of people who have physical disabilities as a direct or indirect result of the war (war wounds or generally poor health).  He argues in favour of special education focused on counselling, therapy, orientation and mobility, transportation, etc.  The costs of special education can be kept low if, instead of Western equipment, local equipment and people are used.

**Friedman, M. and Jaranson, J. 1994. 'The applicability of the post-traumatic stress disorder concept to refugees' In Marsella, A. J. et al. eds. 1994. *Amidst peril and pain: the mental health and well-being of the world's refugees*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.**  The authors defend the concept of post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) against criticism, noting that 'major gaps remain in the understanding of the effects of ethnicity and culture on the clinical phenomenology of PTSD.  Vigorous ethnocultural research strategies are only beginning to be applied in order to delineate possible differences between Western and non-Western societies regarding the psychological impact of trauma and clinical manifestations of such exposure. As a result, whether the PTSD model is applicable in non-Western societies in general and with regard to refugee populations in particular is currently the subject of controversy.' (p.212) ..... 'The PTSD model predicts that traumatized individuals from both Western and non-Western backgrounds will show similar alterations in autonomic reactivity, startle reflex, sleep disturbance, etc. ..... This similar pattern would certainly suggest a universal response.' (p.213)  The authors then assert that ethnocultural and religious tradition is likely to play a large part in how pathological grief is transformed into affective disorder.  They note that 'Buddhist-oriented Khmer refugees showed low levels of survivor guilt...and Khmer and Laotian refugees more generally tended to show low levels of PTSD, though Cambodians in the USA had high rates.' (p.217)  [N.B.: A large portion of the literature on traumatized refugees has been written about Khmer children and adults.] 'We believe that ethnocultural and religious factors may have a particularly powerful and differential influence on the expression of PTSD in non-Western refugee populations.' (p. 219). The authors then answer criticism (Eisenbruch) 'that PTSD pathologises a normal and healthy rehabilitative process...[of] cultural bereavement' (p.220) by suggesting that non-Westerners diagnosed with PTSD respond as well as Westerners.  A second criticism (Punamaki) is that it is inappropriate to apply stress models to politically induced violence and repression since they reduce social, political and historical problems to the individual level.  The authors respond that this fails to distinguish political advocacy from therapeutic intervention., but concede that 'the focus of psychotherapy is generally on the individual.' (p.221)  But the authors agree that the social context is important and argue that such an orientation is 'complementary but certainly not an appropriate substitute for a PTSD focus.' (p.221)

**Macksoud, M., Dyregrov, A. & Raundalen, M. 1993. 'Traumatic war experiences and their effects on children.' In** *International Handbook of Traumatic Stress***, J. P. Wilson & B. Raphael, eds., New York: Plenum Press, pp. 625-34.** The section called 'The child politician' quotes remarks about war made by a 12-year-old boy held captive by Renamo in Mozambique. 'We ask the whole world to help fight the bandits....Children are kidnapped and forced to kill, even their own families.' According to the authors, 'This youth's political appraisal of his experience of war was typical of how Mozambican children tackled the psychological impact of destabilization and violence.' Without noticing the likely partisanship of their proposal, the authors then quote teachers in several war-torn countries who advocate informing children about the political background of the war. They assert that 'with such a 'political-cognitive' frame of reference, children are better able to process the atrocities of a war situation.' (p. 631). The authors conclude by proposing that children could become involved in 'an appeal to world opinion to put pressure on the war makers [as therapy!].' .... 'The state of the art in the study of the long-term effects of war is still novel. Many questions remain unanswered.' The authors question whether Israeli stress-inoculation methods work or whether they in fact produce more anxiety, and the authors conclude, 'For as yet we do not really know what happens to a generation of vulnerable children who have lost their sense of safety, who have acquired a high tolerance for violence, who are haunted by terrifying memories, mistrusting and cautious of others, and who hold a pessimistic view of the future.' (p. 632)

**Boothby, N. 1993. 'Trauma and violence among refugee children.' In Marsella, A. J. et al. eds. 1993.** *Amidst peril and pain: the mental health and well-being of the world's refugees.* **Washington DC: American Psychological Association.** This book contains valuable material on Renamo and child combatants. 'A PTSD approach is not sufficient. Instead, the intervention goal is to create a more positive social reality for the child through broader assistance efforts that help to support or to re-establish the child's primary relationships to parents, families, communities and, in some cases, larger ethnic groups.' (p. 250) A section entitled 'The importance of considering cultural experience' begins with a remark on the importance of 'knowledge of a given population's own perceptions of the meaning of the conflict, their trauma, and the ways they express psychological and spiritual distress.' ...... 'A systemic, community-based approach is preferable because of the socially based nature of the problem.' (p.252) The rehabilitation of Renamo boys depended less on 'psychological intervention than on their day-to-day relationships with Mozambican Women's Organization caretakers.' (p.254) The Mozambique government's policy that Renamo children would be given appropriate care and not be sent to military prison was decisive, because it is 'the policy of amnesty [that] institutionalises forgiveness...[and] provides some boy soldiers with the opportunity to return home.' (p.254). Several key points are made in the conclusion. 'The relationship between psychological processes and political contexts also suggests that it is necessary to move beyond simple formulations of the parent and family 'buffering model' and include the importance of the political context itself.' 'One-dimensional stress models that focus on individual determinants of children's coping do not provide an adequate conceptual framework.....The nature of the conflict, how children understand it, and how they perceive their roles in it, all have an impact on psychological processes and mental health outcomes. A two-dimensional model that considers the context of the crisis itself and children's coping in relation to that context, rather than solely in abstract, individualistic terms, is needed.' (p.255) 'Although individual approaches may be useful in these contexts, the major thrust of primary mental health initiatives needs to be oriented toward the family and the community, rather than just the individual child.' (p.256)