YOUTH SPEAK OUT:
New Voices on the Protection and Participation of Young People Affected by Armed Conflict

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

January 2005

MISSION STATEMENT

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children works to improve the lives and defend the rights of refugee and internally displaced women, children and adolescents. We advocate for their inclusion and participation in programs of humanitarian assistance and protection. We provide technical expertise and policy advice to donors and organizations that work with refugees and the displaced. We make recommendations to policy makers based on rigorous research and information gathered on fact-finding missions. We join with refugee women, children and adolescents to ensure that their voices are heard from the community level to the highest councils of governments and international organizations. We do this in the conviction that their empowerment is the surest route to the greater well-being of all forcibly displaced people. The Women's Commission is an independent affiliate of the International Rescue Committee. The Women's Commission was founded in 1989.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AHH	Adolescent-headed household
CAP	(UN) Consolidated Appeal
CBO	Community-based organization
CCYA	Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities
CDF	Civilian defense forces
CFS	Child-friendly spaces
CPA	Concerned Parents' Association
CWBC	Child Well-being Committee
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DOY	Department of Youth
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GBV	Gender-based violence
GYFA	Gulu Youth for Action
IDP	Internally displaced person
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KEWG	Karen Education Working Group
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
KYC	Kosovar Youth Council
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MISP	Minimum Initial Service Package (of reproductive health services)
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PEP	Post-exposure prophylaxis
RHRC	Reproductive Health Response in Conflict (Consortium)
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SCG	Search for Common Ground
STC	Save the Children
STEP	Skills Training and Employment Promotion
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
TOR	Terms of reference
TYAP	Thai Youth AIDS Prevention Project
UAM	Unaccompanied minors
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UPDF	Ugandan People's Defense Forces
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing
WESS	Water Environment and Sanitation Society
YCG	Youth coordinating group
YP	Young people
YRTEP	Youth Reintegration Training and Education Program

Contents

Introduction

In January 2000, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (Women's Commission) released the report *Untapped Potential: Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict*, which described some achievements and major gaps in support for the rights of refugee, internally displaced, returnee and other adolescents in emergencies and post-conflict situations. The product of desk research, *Untapped Potential* identified rights abuses adolescents regularly suffer in armed conflict and displacement precisely because of their age and gender amid a diverse range of social, economic, political, cultural and historical circumstances. It identified these young people as "the underserved of the underserved," with little attention paid to their rights or roles in humanitarian or reconstruction work and few lessons documented or shared on how best to improve their lives. It also described the devastating consequences of this neglect.

The Women's Commission followed this work with a series of field-based, action-oriented studies designed and led by adolescent research teams to build on the findings of *Untapped Potential*. In all, more than 3,000 adolescents, youth and adults in Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone participated in these studies, and many of them became involved in intensive follow-up advocacy and related youth-led programs. Young people interviewed their peers about a range of issues to answer questions central to this research: What are the main problems of adolescents in your society? What are some solutions to these problems? What is adolescence, and how does someone become an adult in your society? The young researchers also worked closely with adults and adult-run nongovernmental, governmental and United Nations organizations, whose representatives helped them logistically, participated in interviews and later used the young people's results to shape policies and programs. The achievements and comparative findings of these efforts are presented here, in *Youth Speak Out: New Voices on the Protection and Participation of Young People Affected by Armed Conflict*.

The Women's Commission undertook this work as part of an ongoing campaign to improve services and protection to adolescents affected by armed conflict and persecution by increasing knowledge and targeted program and policy action for change. Findings in *Youth Speak Out* also draw on preliminary research undertaken in Thailand with refugees from Burma and a study with refugee children and adolescents from Afghanistan working in harmful labor conditions in urban Pakistan. The report is further informed by the Women's Commission's work with young people in international and regional conferences, including the Winnipeg Conference on War-affected Children (2000) and the United Nations Special Session on Children (2002).

Youth Speak Out provides new information and practical ideas generated by young people themselves for further coordinated advocacy and immediate action for and with young people affected by armed conflict based on experience gained about what is needed and what works. It is for decision-makers at all levels: governmental and other donors; United Nations headquarters and field representatives; international and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); adolescents and youth; academics; and others with responsibility or concern for refugee young people. It shows how actions many of these groups have taken so far with and for young people affected by armed conflict *have made significant constructive differences* in their protection and well-being and that of their communities. It also identifies the serious gaps that remain. It describes how young people view their own protection environment. Their diverse perspectives point to the need for a new conceptual framework informed by them, explaining why and how refugee young people's rights should be supported. Finally, *Youth Speak Out* identifies specific and practical steps that can and should be taken *now* to expand on good program experiences and improve on policy guidelines for young people's protection and care. Supporting the rights of adolescents and youth, especially their participation, is not only an obligation, it is essential good practice.

Executive Summary

Young people continue to suffer widespread abuse before, during and after armed conflicts. Although they bear considerable responsibilities in protecting and providing for themselves and their communities, their voices are still not systematically sought out by adult decision-makers, and their capacities to find innovative solutions are still largely disregarded by governments and humanitarian groups. Despite these impediments, however, many young people have found ways to work together and with adults to advocate for their rights, promote their strengths and make progress against violence. Drawing on research conducted by more than 150 adolescents in Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone, *Youth Speak Out* provides a unique overview of the problems and challenges young people face during and after armed conflict and, more importantly, offers youth-driven *solutions* for addressing these problems.

In all three locations, young people said adults did not take their opinions into account consistently in decision-making, or engage them in program action regularly, leaving them with limited opportunities to develop their skills and improve their lives. Young people viewed all of these factors as major threats to peace and security. Some were very aware of their power and threatened continued armed struggle if they were not involved and supported by their governments or other adults.

Working together with the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, as well as with other youth and adults, young researchers in these three conflict-affected areas interviewed approximately 3,000 of their peers and adults about young people's top concerns, and how they could best be addressed. They asked questions such as: How can and should humanitarian groups, governments, adult community members and young people themselves work together, or on their own, to improve young people's protection and well-being? The results of their work provide useful information about how young people in different social and cultural contexts define what "protection" and "well-being" mean to them, reveal common patterns and specific differences in young people's experiences across conflicts, and identify the types of programs and policies they have found most valuable. In addition, their findings challenge assumptions held by adult decision-makers about the capabilities and potentials of adolescents and youth affected by armed conflict, and make a strong case for promoting the participation of young people in decision-making as an essential means of ensuring their protection. Finally, *Youth Speak Out* affirms the need to create opportunities to build strong, constructive relationships between young people and adults.

Across conflicts, the girls and boys surveyed expressed similar top concerns, including threats of violence and physical insecurity, psychosocial difficulties and a range of socio-economic development problems—in particular, lack of both formal and non-formal educational opportunities. Girls and boys also faced distinct problems based on their gender, and girls on average faced greater challenges than boys in securing support for their rights. Among experiences common to each region were recruitment into fighting forces; gender-based violence and discrimination, principally against girls, although boys were also subjected to sexual and other forms of violence due to gender roles; teen sex, parenthood and exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV; lack of parental care; and social disconnection or marginalization. The origins of these concerns varied from region to region, and depended on the nature and history of the particular conflict, the diverse geographical impact within a particular region, the phase of the emergency, gender roles, cultural norms, age and stage of development, and other contextual factors.

When insecurity was ongoing, such as in Kosovo and Uganda, whether during war or post-conflict, the need for peace and security was overwhelmingly young people's top concern; however, the source of insecurity varied widely between and within conflict-affected areas. In Sierra Leone, where armed conflict had mostly subsided, young people were mainly concerned about access to education (formal and non-formal, as well as vocational training), livelihood and health care to ensure their recovery and avoid further war. Certain issues were common in all areas, such as early and forced marriage of girls.

Young people overwhelmingly cited lack of quality education as one of their top concerns, and behind peace and an absence of violence in their lives, they called education *the top solution* to the problems they face across all conflicts.

They linked the absence of education closely to poverty, unemployment and the lack of material support and basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter and health care.

Young people also highlighted many situations where decision-makers failed to act, and emergency, post-conflict and development teams failed to systematically support their rights and roles with devastating consequences. For example, peace has not been achieved in northern Uganda, leading to record levels of displacement and child and adolescent abductions. The internationally brokered Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Program in Sierra Leone was gender-blind and failed to address the specific rights of thousands of girls demobilizing from fighting forces. Everywhere, adolescents and youth continue to be overlooked in education in emergencies interventions, and girls lag far behind boys in accessing education. Government, United Nations and nongovernmental actors do not regularly collect data on adolescents and youth in emergencies and post-conflict, and have poor accountability mechanisms in place to ensure their protection.

Important programs and solutions have been identified by or undertaken with young people that are instructive and present promising practices:
- **Education** in many forms further ensures the protection, health and psychosocial well-being of young people, and enhances their prospects of finding jobs and other means of economic support.
- Appropriate **skills training** helps ensure the protection and psychosocial well-being of young people, and enhances their prospects of finding jobs and other means of economic support.
- **Participation**, such as inclusion in reconstruction and economic development planning and projects, is vital for the recovery and well-being of young people.
- Availability of information about **reproductive health** and access to services that are welcoming, affordable and confidential are essential.
- Young people need support in **developing life skills** that help them communicate better, interact socially, make informed decisions and negotiate difficult situations.
- Young people need **constructive relationships with adults and peers**, including mentorship to prepare them for the essential community and national leadership roles they will one day assume.
- The creation of **safe spaces** for social interaction provides a place where young people can relax and receive and share lifesaving information on a variety of subjects, including on landmines and HIV/AIDS.

Participating in decision-making and program implementation helped young people overcome feelings of social dislocation and build self-esteem, self-reliance and a new sense of identity that allowed them to heal and even thrive. Over time, their involvement in programs produced a much broader social impact, as young people applied the skills and experiences they gained in new ways, forming organizations that significantly improved the lives of their peers and whole communities. They confronted hard questions about what they value most in life, and took important steps toward creating peaceful, healthy environments.

Young people proved through their actions that they are often the most effective members of their communities in reaching out to and assisting their peers, but their activities must be informed and strengthened by adult participation and cooperation. Young people therefore are calling on the full range of stakeholders and actors—governments, NGOs, UN, community adults and young people themselves—to take action now and work together to bridge the gaps cited in this report. They are asking for more resources and coordinated support to build on the experience they have gained, and improve and test guidelines for their protection and well-being that are fully *youth driven*. They remind us that if they are not involved in planning and action, the rights and roles of the majority of the population will be undermined. If humanitarian emergency and post-conflict reconstruction programs continue to overlook the rights, capacities and needs of young people, the likelihood of their success will be greatly diminished and instability will continue.

The research conducted by the young people and the Women's Commission reveals common patterns in young people's experiences across conflicts and identifies the types of programs and policies they have found most valuable. At the same time, one of the main conclusions of this research is that no single, rigid set of actions for young people's

protection and well-being works in every situation. If it is to be useful, support for adolescents and youth must be made creative and innovative by relying on the ideas, experiences and capacities of young people themselves.

The Young: A Demographic Imperative

Over 300 million young people under the age of 25 are living in countries affected by armed conflict, including many internally displaced persons and refugees who are never counted.[1]

People under the age of 25 are consistently the majority of populations affected by armed conflict. Over 30 percent of them are 10 to 25.

Kosovo	Northern Uganda	Sierra Leone	Pakistan
Over 60% of the refugee population was under 25 years old in 1999.[2]	70% of the general population is under 25 years old, and the majority of the population is internally displaced; 65% of Sudanese refugees there are under 25.[3]	63% of the general population was under 25 years old in 2002.[4]	51% of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan in January 2002 were under the age of 18.[5]

International Definitions

The principal international standard for determining who "children" are remains the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states in Article 1 that a "child" is "every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." Thus, this definition acknowledges that national standards may differ. However, the age of majority in most countries is 18.

Additional chronological definitions provided by United Nations organizations that acknowledge differences in and overlap between and within childhood and adulthood are also instructive:

Children: under 18

Adolescents: 10 to 19

Youth: 15 to 24

Young people: 10 to 24

A Note on Definitions

In the years since the Women's Commission began conducting research about adolescents affected by armed conflict, its thinking about who adolescents are, who decides and what the consequences of these decisions are has been transformed by thousands of different descriptions of the passage from childhood to adulthood. International policy-makers, humanitarian workers, donors, academics, tribes, elders and young people themselves all have different perceptions of who young people are, what their responsibilities are and how they should be helped, if helped at all. In order to fully and appropriately support young people, decision-makers at all levels must address these different perceptions.

Throughout this report, the Women's Commission primarily addresses the circumstances of young people who are in their second decade of life and in early adulthood, roughly between the ages of 10 and 24. The Women's Commission is using the terms adolescents, youth and young people in ways that generally correspond to the United Nations definitions described at left but that also account for the overlap in young people's experiences, regardless of age. Ultimately, the realities of young people's lives must be seen in their specific cultural and social context, especially when this context is submersed in and often distorted by the experience of war or ethnic conflict. Youth and adults who are 25 and older also play critical roles in supporting younger people, and ensuring the rights and constructive capacities of young adults is extremely important in ensuring the protection of younger people.

Unless otherwise noted, all citations are attributable to the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children documents:
- *Untapped Potential: Adolescents affected by armed conflict—A review of programs and policies,* 2000.
- *Making the Choice for a Better Life: Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Kosovo's Youth,* 2000.
- *Against all Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents—Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Ugandan and Sudanese Adolescents in Northern Uganda,* 2001.
- *Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone,* 2002.

Young people proved themselves to be invaluable investigators and key informants – essential spokespersons for their concerns and those of their communities. They provided unique, first-hand perspectives on the problems they face, offered viable solutions and described the serious consequences of inaction in support of their rights.

Young people's concerns differed between regions, according to individual as well as gender-specific experiences, and depended on the nature and status of the conflict (ongoing or post-conflict).

There are both similarities and major differences between young people's experiences across conflicts, and there are no "one size fits all" approaches to ensuring their protection and well-being. Action to support young people must be *youth-driven* and must respond to the diversity of their circumstances.

Methodology: How the Research was Conducted

From 1999 to 2002, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children conducted research studies on the situation of adolescents and youth in Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone. The studies provided an in-depth look at the experiences of adolescents affected by war and persecution, and the international and local responses to their situation. They were designed and led by young people, including more than 150 adolescent researchers who interviewed more than 2,300 of their peers and adults. In each region, the researchers worked with the Women's Commission to design the research methodology, which included individual interviews, focus group discussions and surveys of top concerns. The top concerns survey included a list of the major issues adolescent researchers identified as possible concerns. Interviewees ranked what they considered the top five or ten concerns, in order of importance. These responses helped researchers measure the relative importance of issues raised in focus groups and individual discussions. Full details of the methodology of each research project are contained in the reports *Making the Choice for a Better Life: Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Kosovo's Youth* (2000); *Against all Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents—Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Ugandan and Sudanese Adolescents in Northern Uganda* (2001); and *Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone* (2002). See Appendix 1 for more details.

Young People's Top Concerns

The approximately 2,300 young people surveyed in all three regions consistently cited **threats of violence** and **physical insecurity**, **psychosocial hardships** and a range of **socio-economic development problems**—especially lack of education—as their top concerns. Young people also overwhelmingly viewed **education** as key to ensuring their physical protection, psychosocial well-being, and economic and social stability by providing an alternative to violence in the immediate and long terms.

When the threat of physical violence from warring parties was imminent, as in Kosovo and northern Uganda, concerns about physical security were paramount to young people. When armed conflict had substantially subsided in post-conflict Sierra Leone, socio-economic problems were the chief concern and were directly linked to other forms of violence, including sexual violence against girls. Young people consistently reported that they continued to have serious psychological and social difficulties as a result of the violence and deprivation they had experienced during and after conflict, such as feelings of hopelessness and profound social alienation. In all regions, young people stated that gaps in family and community support, as well as lack of education, food, clothing, shelter, health care and jobs, dramatically increased their vulnerability to a range of threats. Young Sierra Leoneans, for example, viewed poverty and lack of education as the root causes of armed conflict, community and family violence, and poor health, including the spread of HIV. (See page 8 for comparisons of top concerns charted by country.)

Young people across conflicts shared major concerns about violence and physical insecurity, psychosocial problems and socio-economic hardship.

In Kosovo, despite the strong ethnic and political divisions between them, the top concerns cited by Serb, Albanian, Bosniak and Roma young people were strikingly similar in the first year following the 1999 peace agreements that officially ended the war.[6] Albeit from very different perspectives, young people of each ethnic background consistently indicated a combination of security and psychosocial problems as their most pressing concerns. They worried about violence and the prevalence of guns and other weapons, including landmines and unexploded ordinance. Serbs and Romas living in enclaves worried about attacks by Albanians, while Albanians worried about growing violence and lawlessness within their own communities. Serbs and Romas in enclaves suffered from restrictions placed on their freedom of movement, and young people in all communities—Albanian, Serb and Roma—feared kidnapping, trafficking, sexual violence and exploitation (especially girls). All were despondent about the loss of family and friends, and Serbs especially felt hopeless about the future. Poverty and the rising prevalence of drugs were also key concerns. Finally, lawlessness, justice for crimes committed during the war, information about missing persons and the political future of Kosovo were constant preoccupations for young people.

Young people in northern Uganda were also principally concerned with the daily threat of physical violence: they were keenly aware that they were key targets for abduction and murder by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Their top priorities were peace, getting an education and returning home from camps for internally displaced persons. As family members were killed in the war or by HIV/AIDS, and as adults had become unable to provide protection, food, shelter, education and other support for their children, young people were also highly concerned about a lack of parental and family care, poverty, unemployment and child abuse at home. Those living in IDP camps and a Sudanese refugee settlement were particularly concerned about the conditions of displacement. They had no protection from LRA attack and few means of cultivating land to feed themselves. Cramped, unsanitary camp conditions contributed to social distress. Girls identified rape and "defilement"[7] by community men and boys, and by members of the Ugandan military, as a key problem and were concerned about unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

In post-conflict Sierra Leone, young people's top concerns were lack of educational opportunities; poverty; unemployment; and lack of health care, shelter, food, water and clothing. These concerns were more important to them than other threats of physical harm, including sexual violence and exploitation and forced marriage. Believing that the conflict stemmed from social inequality, the mismanagement of Sierra Leone's natural resources and the political marginalization of young people, young people saw material well-being and access to social and political institutions as essential to both their own recovery and as the means to a permanent end to armed conflict and social degradation. Ongoing displacement, the absence of parental and family care, neglect by elders and government, and the lack of opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making were also major concerns.

Girls and boys, older and younger, overwhelmingly expressed the same priority concerns in all three areas, although there were notable differences. All young people reported rarely, if ever, being asked their opinions about decisions made by adults that affect them.

Comparison of Top Concerns Surveyed among Young People Across Conflicts[8]

Categories of Young People's Concerns
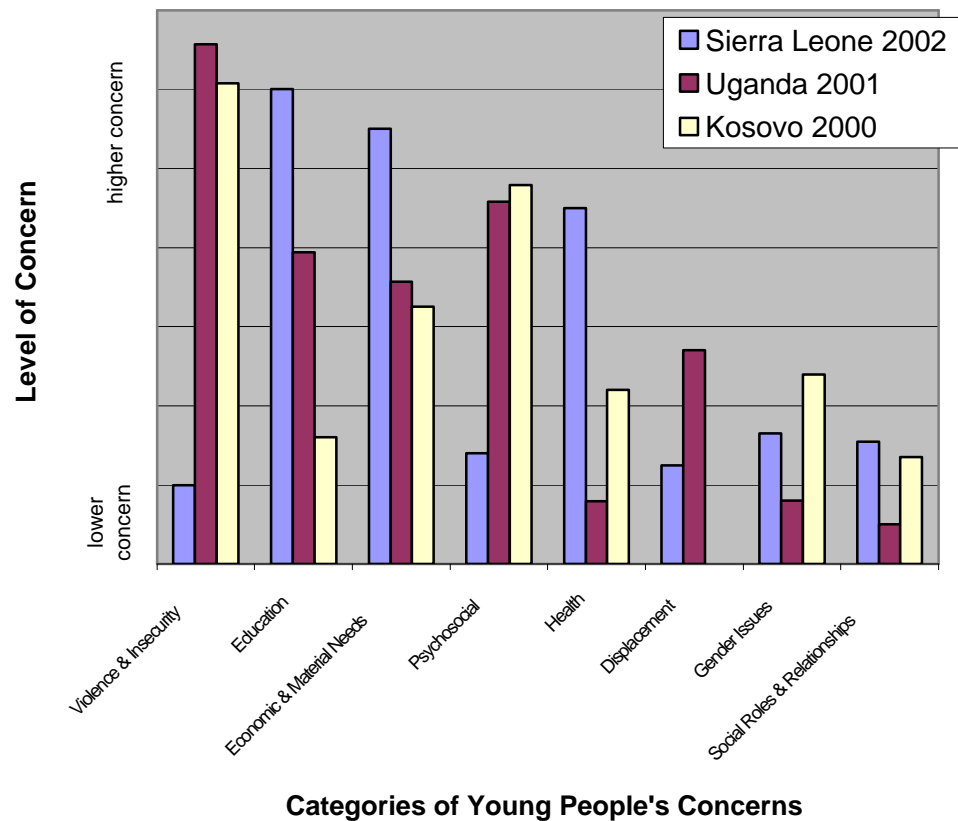
Sierra Leone (post-conflict): Education/livelihood/health
Uganda (ongoing conflict): Insecurity/psychosocial/education/livelihood
Kosovo (post-conflict): Insecurity/psychosocial/livelihood

Education

"I'm not in school because I'm taking care of five children. Otherwise, I'd love to study every day."
– Jean, 14, northern Uganda

"[A]fter I passed my Primary Leaving Examination, I was admitted to S1. But when I asked for school fees, my step-mother said, 'If you want to go to school, you will have to wait until my last born is up to university and I've bought myself a coffin. Then you can go.' "
– Rachel, 16, Kitgum Town Council, northern Uganda

Education holds such significance for young people that its absence or disruption generates feelings of hopelessness, uncertainty and abandonment, as well as physical and economic insecurity. Young people named lack of quality education one of their top concerns, and behind peace and an absence of violence in their lives, they called education *the top solution* to the problems they face across all conflicts.

The meaning of education in the lives of young people has such power that without it they expressed feelings of hopelessness, uncertainty and abandonment by their society. Young people believed that education is essential to their survival, protection and full recovery from their experience of armed conflict. They saw it as answering their need for self-respect, economic opportunity and having productive roles and voices in society. Education universally represented an essential prerequisite to peace and security. Yet, despite its central role in their lives, adolescents and youth had more difficultly than younger children accessing education.

Young people stated that the principal barriers to education of any kind for their age group were insecurity and the destruction of education systems; the high costs of attending school; transportation problems; and competing responsibilities, especially for girls. Teen parents, heads of households and orphans in all three conflict areas had particular difficulties obtaining education because, in addition to caring for themselves, they had the added responsibilities of caring for younger siblings and sometimes their own children. Young people said they were often forced to choose between learning and survival and care-giving priorities.

The new Global Survey on Education in Emergencies conducted by the Women's Commission with UNHCR, UNICEF and UNESCO reveals that attention to adolescent and youth education in emergencies is severely lacking.

Existing education initiatives predominately supported formal primary school for younger primary school-aged children. Few programs focused on the distinct educational needs of adolescents and youth who wanted to rebuild their lives and resume or "catch up on" their education after war and survive at the same time. Young people needed classes to catch up on primary education, flexible hours to accommodate work and family responsibilities and/or vocational and skills training linked to jobs. Due to the breakdown of both traditional family networks and the social infrastructure, non-formal opportunities for learning job and life skills, such as those acquired through apprenticeships, family trades and recreational activities, were also very limited.

In Sierra Leone, young people viewed education as vital to the establishment of peace, and said that access to education opportunities would help them feel less excluded from society. Demobilized adolescent soldiers threatened to return to war if international promises made to provide education and skills training were not kept. The absence of educational opportunities and jobs also drove some girls into commercial sex work, early marriages and continued poverty.

Helping more adolescent girls and boys complete primary school or basic education is essential to increased access to secondary and other post-primary educational opportunities, a positive self-identity, autonomy, social and physical protection, and much more.

In Uganda, although Universal Primary Education was instituted for all children, costs for materials and uniforms remained out of reach for most young people in the war-torn north. Non-tuition costs for primary school in northern Uganda averaged $120 per year, and secondary school costs were about $350 per year in a country where the estimated annual per capita income was $140 in 2001. In the United States,

by comparison, that would mean $26,427 of an annual per capita income of $30,832 would go to primary school costs for one child.[12] Many of those who did manage to receive formal education dropped out in the later years of primary school, when they began to enter adolescence. In Sierra Leone, for example, the age of 15 was a pivotal time for dropouts, which coincided with the completion of primary school.

During the refugee crisis of 1999, Albanian Kosovars were welcomed to take refuge in camps and urban areas in Albania, but the government did not allow all young people immediate access to public education. Some refugees entered public schools, and some did not. Some refugees set up their own schools without initial external support and still others were attracted to schools opened by religious groups during the crisis. At the same time, UNICEF prioritized education for 6- to 14-year-olds, drawing attention away from the educational needs of older adolescents and youth.[13]

Despite "official" commitments[14] to gender equality in education, girls in each region did *not* have equal access to education, compared with their male peers, and often faced gender-specific barriers. In Sierra Leone, 60 percent of girls, on average, were not attending primary school, and at least 76 percent did not attend secondary school, compared to 71 percent of boys.[15] In northern Uganda, boys were more likely to complete primary school and did better on Primary Leaving Examinations than girls, and fewer girls went on to secondary school. Most girls and boys in each region agreed that, in general, parents valued boys' education more than that of girls. Girls also said inadequate clothing, security and sanitary supplies kept many out of school. Many girls also dropped out because they were forced into early marriages or became pregnant.

Access to secondary school was nearly impossible for most young people in Sierra Leone and northern Uganda, virtually guaranteeing that they would not have the skills necessary to contribute to the economic development of their communities over time. While young refugees from Kosovo attended secondary school more often over all, they still faced major barriers. Fearing overcrowding, the Albanian government delayed entry into secondary school, and mandated that a summer school program be set up for refugee adolescents seeking to enter secondary school in the fall—a policy decision that left many young people idle. Later, Albanians returned to "normal" secondary schools in Kosovo after years of participating in a parallel school system, but the schools were in bad condition. Many young people in rural areas, especially girls and minority Romas, could not complete or move beyond primary school. Under very difficult security constraints, many Serb young people separated from family members in order to complete their secondary education. In all post-conflict schools in Kosovo, posters of ethnic war heroes dominated walls instead of young people's art projects or other learning tools, and curricula required major reform to reinforce tolerance and non-violence.

Internally displaced young people often face even higher barriers to education than do refugees. For example, some young Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda fared better than Ugandan internally displaced youth because the refugees had help from UNHCR. By contrast, no international agency was charged with the protection and care of all IDPs. Less than 30 percent of school-age children in IDP camps were enrolled on a full-time basis, compared with the 93 percent primary school enrollment rate in other parts of Uganda. Despite the same security constraints, 77 percent of refugee students in northern Uganda were enrolled in primary school in

one settlement that also benefited local Ugandan children. At the same time, both IDPs and refugees had equally poor access to secondary school.

Young people who were able to attend school said it was difficult to learn. Their classrooms were often overcrowded and broken down or even without walls and a roof. In the Achol Pii refugee settlement in northern Uganda, each teacher served a class of 110 children in their primary school. In all areas, paper, pens and books were lacking. Many teachers had been killed or had taken other jobs for their own economic survival. Those who remained, according to young people, were often unsupportive and badly prepared. Young people disliked teachers talking *at* them and called their methods old-fashioned and boring. Young people asked for more participatory approaches to teaching and for more opportunities to learn practical and vocational skills. They also asked for more support to help teachers. One young person said, "We bring our teachers lunch, so that they will come back to us each day."[17]

Many girls dropped out [of school] because they were compelled into early marriages or became pregnant.[16]

Young people said schools were also often dangerous places. Many schools were targets of war, were destroyed or taken over and used by soldiers. Some school officials were also sources of violence, abusing their authority by raping and exploiting students, exchanging sex for grades or overcharging for tuition. In northern Uganda, the rebels abducted young people from schools and along roads to and from school. Schools were also places for indoctrinating young people. In Kosovo, parallel school systems taught different versions of history to Albanian and Serbian students, emphasizing divisions between them in the years leading up to the war.

The disruption of traditional learning and skill acquisition from families, such as agricultural farming, caused a change in young people's skill sets and employment aspirations, affecting the community's ability to survive and thrive in exile and upon return home. IDPs and refugees in northern Uganda also faced legal and security restrictions on subsistence farming, which eliminated important opportunities for young people to learn and practice the traditional livelihood of their rural communities. Sierra Leoneans who took refuge in neighboring Guinea had access to a strong formal education system set up by the International Rescue Committee. These young people returned home to their rural communities without agricultural skills and with desires to do other kinds of work instead. Many of them remained separated from family upon return to continue their studies and work in Sierra Leone's bustling capital, Freetown. As more freedom came to young ethnic Albanian Kosovars and their contact with international groups increased, their interest in a range of educational opportunities, from studying English to acquiring computer skills, skyrocketed.

All of these changes revealed education to be a dynamic force in the lives of young people, and one that necessitates responses that take into account the diversity of their experiences and needs, from protection to livelihood and psychosocial healing.

In order to prepare a solid foundation for their future, it is imperative that young people have adequate opportunities and flexible access to both formal and non-formal education, as well as vocational training opportunities that can ensure their livelihoods.

Livelihood

"I took up arms because of selfishness, greed and discrimination by [President] Kabbah. For us, lasting peace is to keep promises…There are no improvements now, because the promises are not forthcoming…if [they are] not, and they call us, we will come back [and fight], we are ready. "
– Former RUF adolescent soldier, Makeni, Sierra Leone
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"I went out to the street to be a prostitute to get money… just to get money to eat and to give to my parents."
–Marie, 17, Makeni, Sierra Leone

In armed conflict, large numbers of young people have either been forced, or are poised to enter the labor force without the skills or education they need to generate a sufficient livelihood. In addition, markets are often weak and do not support their livelihoods. Addressing young people's poverty is central to their protection.

The upheaval and devastation of armed conflict forced many young people to find the means to survive on their own as well as support others in all phases of emergency. Young people who became orphaned or separated from family, heads of household or teen mothers showed tremendous resourcefulness as they took on major economic and social responsibilities. Adult decision-makers, however, did not consistently support them in their new livelihood roles—an inconsistency that led to major health, protection and psychosocial problems for many young people.

In post-conflict Sierra Leone and Kosovo, little was done to comprehensively assess and match youth employment and skills needs with immediate and long-term reconstruction and economic development planning. According to a situational analysis by UNICEF and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo's (UNMIK's) Department of Youth nine months after the official end of the war, "There has been no official labor market or skills survey done for Kosovo, and…there has been only limited discussion about linking economic development with useful vocational education."[18] Facing large-scale unemployment, many young Serbs and Albanians left Kosovo in search of jobs. Many of the Serbs living in isolated enclaves left for other parts of the former Yugoslavia, which were also entrenched in the post-war economic crisis.

All young people affected by armed conflict say they need the means to become self-reliant, for their protection, survival, self-esteem and ability to improve their societies.

In Sierra Leone, many young people believed that the war had fundamentally been about the marginalization and manipulation of youth. They said many young people took up arms to fight for the economic and social protection they had been denied, especially by those in government and private industries that exploited the diamond trade for profit and personal gain, without concern for the rest of the population that lived in poverty. Young people wanted international oversight of Sierra Leone's mining industries to avoid further war over control of these resources. Without support for their economic well-being, young people believed that their health would further deteriorate and that war would likely reemerge.

A major focus on international support for the livelihood of young people affected by conflict is through DDR programs, despite the fact that a very small proportion of young people affected by conflict have participated in fighting forces.

The most comprehensive support for young people's livelihood in Sierra Leone was provided to demobilizing soldiers. Those who gained access to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program were part of an integrated approach that combined education, job and life skills, with family tracing and reunification, medical care and counseling. However, few of the skills training initiatives led to viable employment. Programs were under-resourced and incomplete, and local markets could not sustain large numbers of young people practicing the same trade. With some exceptions, skills training provided through the DDR program was principally a psychosocial intervention and a step toward peace rather than an economic support mechanism.

Future DDR programs should not repeat the mistakes made in Sierra Leone, where girls were widely excluded despite their major roles in fighting forces and distinct reintegration rights.

Education and skills training for young people must be linked to economic recovery planning that accommodates growing youth employment needs and generates the skills needed by society to ensure survival, and contribute to reconstruction and economic development over time. Girls and disabled young people must be fully included in these efforts.

Young people suggested that vocational training programs serve as a supplement to primary and secondary school education, in order to provide links to viable employment opportunities.

Moreover, the DDR program in Sierra Leone failed to ensure that girls and women who were part of fighting forces were fully included. Although girls were by some counts more than half of all young people in fighting forces, they were only 7.7 percent of children and adolescents who formally demobilized. The program narrowly defined beneficiaries as "combatants" and at first required participants to turn in a weapon, many of which were taken from girls by military leaders to exclude them. When the fighting subsided, some girls were left behind and remained with their captors, while others who fled captivity on their own, including with their children, could not easily find support from the program later on. Many of them turned to prostitution to survive.

Similarly, in northern Uganda, livelihood support to young people came mostly as part of programs to reintegrate former child and adolescent soldiers. At the same time, young people said the deep poverty they were experiencing after a lifetime of war resulted in part from being forced to live in crowded camps without access to safe land for farming. Humanitarian assistance was minimal, and often late or not delivered due to insecurity, resulting in young people's diminished health and nutrition. Young people in northern Uganda said that their livelihood opportunities would only really improve when peace came to the region allowing them to leave IDP camps and return to their lands to farm safely.

Girls were especially affected by inadequate humanitarian assistance. Without support or livelihood alternatives, many were forced into prostitution, exchanging sex for goods and services. Girls bore major household responsibilities and were often kept home while boys were sent to school. Ironically in Sierra Leone, girls and boys said that many parents believed that girls who attended school would become prostitutes, instead of recognizing the eventual economic disadvantages that result from their not having gone to school. Girls were also increasingly bartered and sold as families struggled financially. In some cases, long-held traditions of marriage were turned upside down as parents sold off their very young daughters to receive a bride price.

Despite limited support, many young people undertook livelihood initiatives on their own and with help from NGOs. Former adolescent soldiers began a bicycle cooperative in Makeni, Sierra Leone, supporting one another and providing needed transportation within the community. In northern Uganda, young people formed agricultural cooperatives, raised goats and took turns tilling small patches of one another's land. In Kosovo, whole communities of women and girls left behind after the massacre of boys and men learned non-traditional skills and continued to work their family farms. Other young people put their studies on hold and took jobs with international groups, working as translators, driving and doing other work to earn money to reconstruct their homes and buy food and medicine.

No matter how hard young people worked, they said they barely made enough to make ends meet. Those lucky enough to participate in training courses said the skills they learned were rarely profitable, and the supplies needed to actually undertake new professions—such as seeds and farming tools—were frequently unavailable. Young people in refugee and IDP camps had particular difficulties finding a market for their goods or services, due to the limited purchasing power of their primary customers—other refugees and IDPs. As a result, many bartered instead, which they said did not allow them to develop their trades and businesses, pay for school fees, or meet other needs.

As a solution to these problems, young people suggested that, in addition to formal primary and secondary schooling, vocational training programs be linked to viable employment opportunities. Young people expressed interest in learning a range of skills such as auto mechanic, bicycle repair, tailoring, computer skills and driving, as well as language, business and life skills. They also said that beyond training, they need mentoring support to apply the skills they learned, as well as credit and start-up capital.

Coping with the Changes Brought on by Social Upheaval

Each morning, Jennifer wakes early to carry the heavy pot of cooked cassava she made the night before to market to be sold. With what she earns, she can barely pay the rent on her hut or feed herself and her younger brothers and sisters. But at 13, she heads the household because her parents were killed in the war in northern Uganda, and every day she wonders how she will avoid abduction by rebels or if she will ever finish school.
– Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents, page 26

"We are really in a dilemma. Our family structure is disrupted, and children grow up with little guidance. With the war, the 'fireplace values' passed on through storytelling are no longer there."
– George Omono of GUSCO, northern Uganda

Young people will find a variety of ways to cope with their circumstances. In some situations, as in Sierra Leone, young people are highly aware of their power and potential to force the changes they require through violent means. Young people need guidance and support to identify healthy paths to a better life.

Thousands of adolescents and youth in conflict areas were forced to find ways to cope and protect themselves when social support systems were torn apart by war. Dramatic role reversals took place, as parental and community support had either disintegrated completely or were in rapid flux. Opportunities for young people and adults to negotiate the changes in their social circumstances were limited, and the generation gap between them widened as young people struggled to find new ways to survive, connect and find a place in society.

As young people took on new roles, community views of them often hardened. Young people in Sierra Leone were increasingly viewed as potentially violent and dangerous. In northern Uganda, both parents and children grew concerned about young people's "immorality" when social controls loosened and girls and boys began relationships or socialized with one another without parental approval. As young ethnic Albanians lobbied to support their management of a youth center in Kosovo, some decision-makers blocked their efforts saying they were practicing "too much democracy." In each country, as education systems failed and young people lost opportunities to learn, they were viewed as ignorant, inarticulate and lacking credibility.

Traditional markers of the transition from childhood to adulthood were also transformed by war. For males in Sierra Leone, young people said getting a job and getting married used to signify the passage to adulthood. The war, however, had made this passage impossible for many, such that men in their 40s and 50s believed that they were still "youth." For girls, the traditional transition to adulthood was said to come with physical development, their initiation into a secret society that performed the ritual of female genital mutilation (FGM), and finally marriage. However, many girls who were refugees, displaced or abducted during the conflict, were not initiated into a secret society. Some did not ultimately want to undergo the ritual at all, greatly upsetting adults, who saw both their authority and livelihood challenged.

In Kosovo, although the experience of having fought in the war made some adolescents feel that they had already left childhood behind, when the war ended, they said adults did not respect them and continued to treat them like children. After their harsh experiences in the war, many young people in Kosovo said that events that denote a "normal" rite of passage into adulthood—such as getting a driver's

license, finishing school or getting married—now seemed trivial. They no longer felt like children, but did not yet consider themselves adults.

Many young people increasingly mistrust adults, who are unable to keep them out of harm's way, to feed and clothe them, and at times become additional sources of abuse. Young people and adults need support to build new, compassionate and understanding relationships with one another, during and after conflict.

Many adults coped with social upheaval by trying to reinforce their authority according to previous social norms, even if those norms had been suspended for years. They often demanded respect and unquestioning compliance from young people because of their own loss of status and control. Some adults became new or worse abusers, and threats to young people came not only from outside the family, but from within, where protection should be fundamental. Some parents sanctioned the sale, early marriage or sexual exploitation of their daughters. Others felt helpless, abused alcohol and beat and psychologically abused their children. Still others knew they were failing young people but had few ideas about what to do to make things better.

The psychosocial impact of this social upheaval manifested itself in many different ways among young people, who said they often felt unloved, abused and even betrayed by adults and society. Many lived in constant fear of violence and deprivation, and some developed psychological problems that required counseling or other traditional healing rituals to address. Some further broke traditional boundaries by increasingly challenging adult authority, and demanding more support for their capacities and community roles. Others, however, lacked self-confidence and a sense of self-worth or agency despite the creative skills they had developed to survive during the war. Demobilized adolescent soldiers in Sierra Leone, like most other young people in the country without educational or job opportunities, felt acutely socially, economically and politically marginalized, and some warned that if they were not supported, war would likely continue. In every region, young people found few spaces where they could address their concerns or engage with adults to work out constructive solutions. Many felt desperately "disconnected" and longed to find a secure place and identity in their communities.

New "peer ecologies," or sources of peer support, are important starting points for a range of youth and community support programs that build on young people's capacities, interests and needs.

Peer relationships became enormously important to young people in the conflict-affected areas. As they were regularly failed by adults who could not—or would not—protect them, young people turned to one another for comfort, companionship and support. Young people coped with their circumstances together in a wide variety of ways. These included romance, monitoring one another's protection in camps, income-generation, education and much more. A group of northern Ugandan adolescent boys who were desperate for income banded together to help one another till their fields and raise and sell goats. Girls in each area found spaces to talk and relax while waiting their turn to use water pumps, doing laundry and at the market.

Young people also banded together to cope in ways that proved harmful to themselves and others. Some joined armed forces, criminal bands and formed political groups with military ties. Others took or smuggled drugs. Girls turned to prostitution to make ends meet. While these strategies provided temporary answers for many young people, they were ultimately diversions from healthy alternatives.

Many young people formed youth groups that were extremely important focal points for conveying their concerns to decision-makers and engaging peers in actions to improve their lives. Before the war in Kosovo, young people had a history of

Armed conflict disrupts and destroys social cohesion, but it also creates opportunities for social renewal as young people organize and work together to cope with their circumstances.

activism connected with the Communist party, and there were many youth groups focused on sports and recreation. During and after the war, young people organized new groups, which channeled their energies and ideas into a range of directions–from HIV/AIDS prevention to ethnic tolerance-building. New political parties in Kosovo also developed youth branches. Sierra Leone had a long history of social activism, and had a large number of civil society youth organizations at the time of the adolescents' research with the Women's Commission. Northern Uganda, by contrast, had relatively few civil society youth organizations, but many associations for livelihood or creative arts. All of these groups gave voice and body to young people's concerns and capacities as principal actors in their individual and community recovery. They also formed solid focal points for constructive interaction with adults and adult-run programs, as well as with their peers.

Caring youth and adults play important supportive roles, reaching out to younger adolescents, mentoring them and helping them organize. At the same time, young people help transform the thinking and actions of those who are older.

In addition to helping them survive and find psychosocial support, all of these activities helped young people feel more "connected" to their communities in ways that would open doors to further and deeper participation in discussion, decision-making and action with supportive adults. Women's Commission research showed conclusively that projects that supported young people's participation in leadership roles while fostering constructive partnerships with adults were more likely to be rights-based, context-specific and have a sustainable impact that improves the well-being of young people and their communities exponentially over time.

Gender-based Violence

"[A] soldier came well-armed at the door calling, 'Everybody out!' Then they picked [me]. Being new in the field [I] refused, but the second night they said 'Either you give in or death.' I still tried to refuse. There the man got serious and knifed me on the head. I became helpless and started bleeding terribly, and that was how I got involved into sex at the age of 14, because death was near."
–Jennifer, 19, northern Uganda

"Attitudes towards rape here are so bad, it has to be the worst thing of all for anyone to have experienced, even beyond death."
– Burim D., 17, Kosovo

Girls and female youth were the principal targets of gender-based violence (GBV) in each of the conflicts. They experienced sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery and abuse, sexual exploitation, forced marriage and domestic violence in all three regions. Girls in the refugee crisis in Albania and in post-conflict Kosovo were also at risk of trafficking for sexual purposes. Sexual exploitation and rape of males also took place, although much less frequently than of girls, and any discussion of the subject was severely limited by social taboos that often silence boys even more than girls.

Many male adolescent researchers who learned about GBV and its effects became strong advocates for girls' rights and are working to raise awareness about gender discrimination among their peers.

Threats of GBV came from within homes, communities and as part of combat. Rape and other forms of GBV were used as weapons of war by combatants and by family members, adolescent peers, teachers and other community members, humanitarian actors, peacekeeping forces and law enforcement officials, both in emergencies and post-conflict. Males were the main perpetrators, but females also contributed. For instance, at times mothers pushed their daughters into prostitution or early marriage.

Girls and boys identified the following key factors contributing to GBV:
- gender discrimination, where girls do not enjoy the same rights as boys and have less control over their lives and bodies and fewer options for achieving self-reliance or making decisions for themselves;
- lack of access to education or sufficient funds to stay in school, especially for girls;
- lack of humanitarian assistance and livelihood opportunities, especially for girls;
- the rise of adolescent-headed households and increasing numbers of young people orphaned or alone with limited access to resources and social support;
- social upheaval, where social controls over sexual behavior and other social protection norms are dismantled;
- lack of parental care and few safe spaces or opportunities to raise any of these concerns constructively to make change.

Young people said conflict exacerbated all these conditions, and that lack of humanitarian assistance and livelihood opportunities for refugees and IDPs contributed to GBV. Without sufficient food, shelter and clothing and few opportunities to earn an income, many girls in IDP camps in northern Uganda traded sex for basic necessities. Girls who were unaccompanied, orphaned or heads of household faced strong pressure to exchange sex for support. In post-conflict Sierra Leone, research conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR) and Save the Children (STC) in 2002 exposed the sexual exploitation of young people in IDP camps by humanitarian workers, UN peacekeepers and other males with authority and/or resources who exchanged services, including education, for sex.[19]

With the exception of adolescent heads of household and young people registered as unaccompanied minors, refugee and IDP young people cannot qualify for humanitarian aid without being somehow attached to an adult. Without access to education or jobs, many girls thus have few alternatives to forced marriage. Inside and outside camps, many parents facing economic destitution pushed their daughters into marriage at very young ages, effectively selling them off to relieve their economic burdens. With marriage came expectations for girls as young as 12 to drop out of school and bear children.

Lack of physical protection also placed girls in camps and urban areas at risk. Criminal groups preyed upon young refugee women and adolescent girls in unguarded camps and in towns in Albania and later in Kosovo, attempting to dupe or coerce them into becoming prostitutes in other parts of Europe. In northern Uganda, IDP girls said that Ugandan government soldiers often raped them in their huts and along roads and that police protection was minimal. During the conflicts in both Sierra Leone and Uganda, many girls were abducted from their homes, raped and held as sexual slaves by rebel commanders. In Albania and Pakistan, refugee girls living with host families sometimes risked sexual abuse by their benefactors, with no one to monitor their safety and provide the international protection they have a right to. Although foster families often provide the best solution for young people separated from family or caretakers, systems to monitor their well-being are incomplete.

Sexual exploitation found fertile ground in post-conflict Sierra Leone and Kosovo when law enforcement structures were not in place, economies were just restarting and large numbers of international personnel had arrived. Poverty and poor living conditions also led to parental neglect and abuse. Prostitution was rampant in Sierra Leone, and extended well beyond what was reported in IDP camps. Girls openly solicited customers in bars in Makeni and Freetown, Sierra Leone, at times pushed by parents to go out and not return home without money. Former female soldiers who were not given demobilization support turned to commercial sex work in Sierra Leone. Groups of women and girls also traveled together throughout Sierra Leone to sell sexual services to UNAMSIL peacekeeping forces. In Kosovo, immediately following the war, women and girls were trafficked into the territory against their will to work in brothels serving international workers and local men.

Girls and young women said they were physically and psychologically traumatized by their experiences as sex workers. Survivors in each country confronted health problems related to the violence they suffered, from the risks of early pregnancy and STIs, including HIV/AIDS, to depression and suicide. Women and girls who were raped, and especially those who became pregnant, feared rejection by their families and communities and the possibility that they would never be able to marry. Some were subjected to unsafe abortions.

The shame associated with sexual violence in Albanian culture, for example, was so great, some young people said that survivors were better off dead. Although some had access to counseling, most had limited access to health care and other services,

Insufficient humanitarian assistance to war-affected young people and their families directly contributes to GBV. Young people say they are often compelled to turn to exchanging sex for food and other services when they receive no humanitarian supplies or education, and have no job opportunities.

Although wars are declared officially over, many young people describe how some forms of violence actually worsen after war, such as sexual violence and exploitation in homes, schools and elsewhere.

"If I knew that this was what life would turn out to be, I would have stayed in the bush."
–Formally demobilized adolescent girl, Peacock Farm, Freetown, Sierra Leone, October 2001

Girls need increased support within women-focused GBV programs in order to confront the specific cultural and social barriers they face in overcoming violence and finding assistance that does not result in further abuse or stigma.

and young people turned to one another for support through recreational activities and discussion groups. Survivors also turned to anonymous media-based support systems in Kosovo—through magazines and radio communication—for advice and support in coping with the psychological and at times physical pain they continue to endure.

In addition to support mechanisms such as counseling and discussion groups, survivors of sexual violence said education, jobs and health care were key to their ongoing recovery.

Health

"Malnutrition was unheard of in Acholiland before the insurgency because the land would produce all the food needed for healthy growth and development. The insurgency led to a concentration of people in camps with restricted movement and the destruction of property…This has completely prevented us from cultivating the land and has created malnutrition, starvation and anemia."
   – From the Gulu research team report, 2001.

"The only thing I know about AIDS is that I am scared of it."
***
"That's a homosexual's illness, and I am not in that group."
   – Adolescents in Gjakova, Kosovo, 1999, revealing a strong need for increased education about HIV/AIDS among young people.

Young people affected by armed conflict have distinct health concerns that are linked to all sectors of humanitarian response, from water and sanitation and camp security to access to food, education and jobs.

As principal targets of violence, adolescents and youth placed their very survival above all other health concerns. More than 50,000 young people were killed in these three conflicts, and in northern Uganda, the number has continued to rise almost daily.[20] Although thousands suffered from war-related injuries, disease, deprivation, reproductive health problems and further violence, young people's health concerns were not systematically tracked or prioritized by international aid agencies, as attention continued to focus on children under the age of five.

Insecurity, distance, high costs and embarrassment made it difficult for young people to access health care. Moreover, few were familiar with the practice of seeing doctors for preventive health care. Many relied on traditional remedies when they were sick, which at times caused their condition to deteriorate further. When they did go to the doctor, they said the quality of service was often poor; health facilities were destroyed by the war, medicines were scarce and health professionals needed further training. Many young people believed health care costs were high even when low-cost or free services were actually available to them, revealing major gaps in information and outreach to young people about their health rights.

When a 12-year-old Sudanese unaccompanied minor (UAM) was asked what he might like to do for recreation, he simply said, "Eat."

Young people in northern Uganda and Sierra Leone were extremely concerned about poor sanitation. Without adequate shelter, fresh water or functional sanitation systems, many were forced to drink from dirty creeks and/or use open areas as latrines. Adolescents were highly susceptible to malaria, diarrhea, tuberculosis and other respiratory infections. Kosovar Albanian refugees who fled into Macedonia spent many days in border camps with little assistance, leaving them hungry and dangerously exposed to the elements. Thousands returned to destroyed homes and infrastructure where they braved winter without electricity, reliable heating sources or access to quality medical care.

Young people in northern Uganda and Sierra Leone also suffered from malnutrition. In Sierra Leone, many said they only ate one meal per day, and regularly missed school due to hunger-related weakness. When they did attend school, they were preoccupied by hunger and had difficulty concentrating.[21] Young people, who were forced into IDP camps in northern Uganda because of the daily threats of attack, said they had no access to farmland to grow their own food and received little humanitarian assistance. Refugee adolescents living on their own as unaccompanied minors (UAM) had particular difficulties making their small food rations last a full month or longer. A doctor in northern Uganda stated that many young refugee mothers were becoming anemic from a lack of iron-rich foods and low level of protein in their diets.[22]

Ending FGM or making it a safer ritual requires a holistic approach to girls' and women's health, human rights, education, economic and social issues. Female youth in Sierra Leone expressed interest in learning about how women in other parts of Africa took steps to change their traditional practices to improve girls' health.

Girls are more vulnerable to HIV than boys. A United Nations report estimated that the percentage of adolescents and youth aged 15-24 living with HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone is between 4.9 and 10.2 percent for young females and between 1.6 and 3.4 percent for young males.[23]

Girls and boys need education about HIV/AIDS prevention and care, including the use of condoms. Young people say they are eager to learn communication and negotiation skills and to be able to use them effectively in their relationships.

RH programs for young people in emergencies and post-conflict have increased but are not yet regularized in all humanitarian response programs.

Young people who were wounded and disabled often had trouble finding care and acceptance. Many of the more than 1,000 amputees and 2,500 war-wounded in Sierra Leone were adolescents, but found few programs that adequately focused on their needs. Most lacked the prosthetics they needed to lead more "normal" lives. Some called themselves "no longer sexually useful" and feared they would never be able to marry. They asked for better access to education, skills training and a more holistic approach to reintegration in order to improve the likelihood of community acceptance. In Kosovo, without transportation, wheelchair accessible buildings or teachers trained to work with them, young people with disabilities also had difficulties accessing school or other education opportunities. Many were in need of specialized medical services that few could afford, and which necessitated travel outside the country.

In each conflict, many young people were exposed to STIs, including HIV, as a result of sexual relationships or abuse. Girls were particularly at risk. In Sierra Leone, NGOs reported a high incidence of STIs among adolescents and youth, especially girls and young women subjected to repeated rape. Early marriage, polygamy, lack of reproductive health education and traditional practices that involve the use of skin piercing instruments and contact with blood, e.g., FGM, also increased risks. As many as 80-90 percent of girls in Sierra Leone undergo FGM.[24]

Despite the serious health risks associated with exposure to HIV, most young people reported very little knowledge about STIs and even less about HIV. They said that secrecy and silence about sexuality made discussions with parents or even friends difficult if not impossible. Young people were universally anxious to know more and said that without truthful information, they were strongly influenced by myths about HIV/AIDS. In Sierra Leone, many young people called AIDS "America's Intent to Destroy Sex." Another said, "I don't believe about AIDS and HIV because I do not meet it in my family." Young people needed confidential and safe spaces to learn and speak more openly about relationships and sex.

Myths about the effectiveness of condoms discouraged their use. Young people in Sierra Leone believed men could not feel pleasure while using them, and that they were ineffective against STIs, including HIV. An American Refugee Committee survey of 15- to 24-year-olds in Port Loko, Sierra Leone, said that only one quarter had ever used a condom and less than 10 percent knew three sources of condoms.[25] They were also prohibitively expensive for the average teen, selling for 200-300 leones each, or 10-15 U.S. cents. Some girls said that using a condom made them feel like prostitutes.

Adolescent rape, prostitution and early and unprotected sex increased the number of unplanned pregnancies and children. In Sierra Leone, the young child-bearing age coupled with the lack of prenatal care and health facilities led to maternal and infant mortality rates among the highest in the world: for every 1,000 births, about 195 infants die before their first birthday, compared to only seven in the United States.[26]

Most young people said that drug use increased during and after war. Young combatants from Sierra Leone were forced to use a variety of substances, including

alcohol, marijuana, glue diazepam, cocaine and brown-brown (a mixture of cocaine and gunpowder)[27] to enhance their fearlessness while fighting. In the lawlessness of Kosovo after the official end of the war, drug trafficking increased, and young people acknowledged using drugs, including hashish and marijuana. Police officials also reported that harder drugs were being trafficked and that young people without jobs were at risk of being drawn into the drug trade. Girls and boys said they were turning to drugs because of idleness or uncertainty and to forget the pain of the war. Most drug and alcohol programs were aimed at prevention, not recovery. Young people said that those who have become addicted would benefit from skills training and income-generating projects to further their recovery.

Despite barriers, most young people were extremely interested in knowing more about health issues, including HIV. Health concerns were among the first that they addressed in their youth-led project work. A typical approach began with peer-to-peer outreach for awareness-raising and public information campaigns. However, beyond assessing and addressing young people's knowledge and attitudes, more must be done to assess and ensure their behavioral change and increased access to services. The systematic collection of accurate data on the health status of young people must also be improved.

Recruitment into Fighting Forces

"I was recruited on the 9th of October at Block 6 at midnight. The rebels took me, and they beat me and tortured me. I was forced to carry a load of sugar, and we were moving day and night without rest."
— Chris, a 19-year-old Sudanese living in Achol Pii refugee settlement, northern Uganda, who was abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army.

Contrary to common perceptions of conflict-affected communities, most young people affected by armed conflict are *not* child soldiers.
Estimates place the number of child and adolescent soldiers in the world at 300,000, which is one-tenth of one percent of the approximately 300,000,000 young people under 25 living in countries affected by armed conflict.[28]
Efforts to prevent and recover from this experience must address the circumstances facing *all* young people affected by war out of which young soldiers come and to which they return.

Adolescents played major roles in fighting forces in the conflicts in Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone. Boys and girls were—and still are, in the case of northern Uganda—among government, rebel and local civil defense forces (CDF). In addition to being combatants, the young people served as spies, supplied troops, looted and destroyed property, acted as porters and cooked food. Many girls in Uganda and Sierra Leone were also forced into sexual slavery, raped and forced to bear children in captivity. Young people's participation as soldiers was abetted by the availability of small arms and light weapons.

In each region, the lack of physical protection, education and economic opportunities for young people, as well as indoctrination by adults and peers, contributed to young people's involvement in fighting forces. However, some young people were forcibly recruited, while others felt compelled to volunteer, convinced of a cause and/or in search of sustenance.

In Kosovo, adolescents under the age of 18 made up approximately 10 percent of the ethnic Albanian rebel forces known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).[29] In some KLA battalions, up to 30 percent of fighters were reportedly under 18, most of whom were boys, although some girls also participated.[30] Some former adolescent KLA fighters reported that they volunteered to serve against their parents' wishes. They begged older KLA commanders to allow them to enter the force to fight for their freedom.[31] They said they were motivated by social discrimination, systematic violence against ethnic Albanian communities by Yugoslav forces and stories told by parents and grandparents that depicted generations of oppression.

In northern Uganda, 31 percent of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group are abducted adolescents between 10 and 19, and 5 percent are under the age of 10.[32] At least 21 percent of these young people are female.[33] Between July 2000 and late 2003, it is estimated that more than 10,000 young people were abducted by the LRA, bringing the 17-year total of children and adolescents abducted to more than 20,000.[34] An unknown number of young people in the Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF), the government army, are also under 18.

Issues directly affecting young people, including access to education and jobs, are often deliberately politicized as a war tactic, drawing young people into conflict on the premise that they will be fighting for a "just cause." Thus, young people often possess a heightened political and social consciousness, and are driven to take up arms for a cause, especially when they feel disenfranchised.

The vast majority of young people in the LRA were abducted from schools, their homes, IDP and refugee camps and along roads. LRA leader Joseph Kony used psychological manipulation and terror to keep young people from attempting to flee, endeavoring to convince them that he could read their minds and that spirits mandated the acts of violence they were forced to commit. His tactics also included forcing young people to commit atrocities against their own communities, making it harder for them to return home, and killing any of their peers caught trying to escape. While some young people became diehard fighters, many attempted escape even after years of captivity, manipulation and abuse.

Some 8,000 to 14,000 young people under 18 were part of pro-government and rebel fighting forces[35] in Sierra Leone, or approximately 11 to 20 percent of the total fighting forces.[36] Young people were forced into all fighting groups, but some also joined CDF and rebel groups voluntarily. The Sierra Leonean government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) abducted or otherwise forced young people into their armies, while in some communities, adults placed great pressure on young people and coerced many to join CDF as a rite of passage. Both the RUF and the CDF leaders at times drugged young people to desensitize them to the acts of violence they were called on to commit, including chopping off civilians' limbs by the RUF, and widespread acts of rape. The RUF also systematically indoctrinated new recruits, convincing many to believe they were fighting for social justice and to fight willingly. Some joined the RUF because they had no access to jobs, food or other care and wanted to improve their lives or simply survive, whether it meant carrying water, cooking or killing for rebel forces. Recruits were also pressed into diamond mining, an activity which fueled the war.

The impact of these experiences on young people varied greatly. Many died; others were abused in conflict and also committed abuses against others. Those who survived live with the consequences and memories of their experiences, often with physical wounds to nurse, children to raise, nightmares and family separations to overcome, and community acceptance to regain. Many young people, however, also developed strong survival skills, which formed the basis of their ability to develop important life and coping skills once they returned to civilian life. Many achieved a sense of power and identity, which brought them self-esteem, confidence and a vision for creating better lives for themselves. Young ex-fighters in Kosovo, for example, were highly committed to education for young people and establishing a free society governed by the rule of law. Compared to their peers who had not been part of the KLA, young former soldiers had enormous hope for the future and plans for shaping it.

While young people contributed to the insecurity in each region as members of fighting forces, little evidence has linked them to increased participation in criminal activity following their involvement in the conflict. Young people reported that with more education and economic opportunities, safe spaces, protection and societal equity, the number of child and adolescent soldiers could be reduced. A concerted effort must be made to balance individual support requirements for former child and adolescent soldiers with those of the much wider community of young people to which they return.

THE IMPACT OF SOLDIERING ON GIRLS

The impact soldering had on the lives of girls often varied greatly from its impact on boys. Some girls were admired for their achievements as soldiers, as was the case with some girl soldiers in Kosovo. However, both boys and girls were at times stigmatized within their communities for their involvement with fighting forces, but girls were often specifically vilified for having been raped by their captors or for taking on traditionally male roles. Among other things, this resulted in lost opportunities for marriage and the chance of a normal life. Other girls were simply ignored and excluded from Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs, as was the case for thousands of girls in fighting forces in Sierra Leone, who were initially excluded as "non-combatants." When the diversity of their roles began to be acknowledged, they required targeted support for their specific needs, which included health problems related to sexual violence, early motherhood and loss of education and status.

Supporting Young People's Protection through Participation

To ensure their protection and well-being, young people across conflicts overwhelmingly called for peace and security, education, health care, material well-being and adult support for their capacities, participation and leadership. How did the actions of key adult stakeholders measure up? At best, international and national actors have helped improve the lives of thousands of young people. At worst, they have delayed and even deterred support to young people, greatly intensifying abuses against them. The government of Uganda and the international community have failed to end the war in northern Uganda, and record numbers of young people have been newly displaced, abducted and abused. Internally displaced girls were sexually exploited in Sierra Leone, and it took an international sex scandal involving humanitarian aid workers to generate urgent action to prevent and punish such abuses.

Despite serious gaps, significant efforts were made with and on behalf of young people in each conflict area, although governmental commitments and areas of interest differed. In the year following the end of the war in Kosovo, it was possible to track $6 million in governmental, nongovernmental and intergovernmental support *explicitly* dedicated to adolescents and youth; these funds supported mainly large-scale civic participation, safe spaces, psychosocial support and advocacy initiatives, including those focusing on ethnic tolerance. In Sierra Leone and northern Uganda, on the other hand, few adolescent- and youth-specific projects were initiated, although many young people were supported as part of the DDR program for former soldiers. The DDR included interim care, counseling, family tracing and reunification, medical care, formal education and skills training. In all cases, decision-makers assumed that young people were supported by larger programs for the general population, such as for the rehabilitation of education systems, landmine awareness or refugee repatriation.

The presence of resources and strong youth-focused policies did not always guarantee appropriate or comprehensive support for young people's rights and capacities. In Kosovo, mainstream youth centers and youth advocacy programming did not sufficiently address the concerns of the most marginalized young people, including survivors of sexual violence, out-of-school girls, minority youth and the disabled. In northern Uganda, the government failed to apply its strong national youth policy and activate ministerial support structures to protect young people in the chronic emergency in the north. Although the Ministry of Social Welfare and Gender Affairs coordinated psychosocial responses well, government efforts to protect IDP and refugee camps from attack, as well as education support and outreach to grassroots young people were weak. In Sierra Leone, the Lomé Peace Agreement called for strong attention to young people, but reintegration support was highly compartmentalized, with specific programs assisting young IDPs, refugee returnees, amputees, former abductees and other defined groups. In the absence of a more holistic approach that recognized their diverse needs, young people were forced to compete for scarce resources.

International and local NGOs and their bilateral donors worked to fill many of the gaps in mainstream assistance and undertook a wide range of innovative programs

with young people. In Kosovo, Save the Children adapted a child-friendly spaces concept used with refugees in Albania and immediately created outdoor, mine-free zones where young people could gather and play after returning to destroyed communities. Search for Common Ground (SCG) supported Talking Drum Studio in Sierra Leone, engaging young people as producers, reporters and actors who identify issues for and about young people and advocate on their behalf using radio. SCG also worked with local groups to host an annual Bo Peace Carnival where students and youth groups performed plays about adolescent and youth issues. The impact of these and many other individual endeavors, as well as large-scale youth programs, have not been widely discussed. A diverse range of important protective approaches to supporting young people's well-being are not systematically expanded.

National Ministries of Youth played important catalytic roles in increasing coordination between UN agencies and NGOs, and in drawing government attention to young people's concerns. In Sierra Leone, the appointment of a passionate Minister of Youth and Sport has encouraged trust-building with young people and led to concrete steps toward governmental youth policy reform with the direct involvement of youth organizations. In post-conflict Kosovo, the formation of a Department of Youth (DOY) within UNMIK provided a focal point for coordinating UN and NGO advocacy and action plans for and with young people. Led by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), practitioners and youth worked to influence national youth policy through the DOY. Involving young people in analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of governmental support systems and finding ways to support the pro-youth capacity and legislative muscle of government ministries are important steps in improving national support for young people and measuring its impact.

Although young people universally lacked trust in government, at the same time they wished for government recognition. Ministries of Youth emerged as important focal points for youth advocacy within government and provided coordination among youth practitioners.

Strong policy and program steps were taken by decision-makers to increase young people's involvement in humanitarian program action, but many young people reported that their participation was more consultative than substantive. Youth committees in IDP and refugee camps tended to be led by adults. International NGOs often engaged adults in community outreach actions in emergencies before "integrating" young people, instead of engaging them simultaneously as equally capable and important actors from the outset. Many practitioners viewed young people's participation as time-consuming rather than as effective and essential.

When decision-makers ignore young people as principal actors and fail to undertake programs that fully support their rights and capacities, they are setting the bar for human development out of conflict extremely low, and are undermining critical opportunities for peace and stability. Young people's participation in humanitarian action raises the bar of recovery from basic survival to prosperity and renewal.

Post-war Kosovo was an exception in that international aid agencies clamored to find youth organizations to work with on participatory projects immediately following the war. However, their support was uneven and fostered divisive competition among youth groups. Instead of collaborating with one another to develop a strong youth "voice," youth groups scrambled competitively to establish themselves in the eyes of post-war donors. Support to minority youth groups did not keep pace. It took years for youth organizations to work together effectively to advance issues of importance to them all.

Although international organizations supported young people's participation and action, they rarely released full control over the management of funds or committed to capacity-building over time. Without the responsibility of managing money and/or undertaking and reporting on project results, young people had few opportunities to build their organizational capacities and reputations as trustworthy and competent partners. This narrowed their sphere of influence and deepened their reliance on

adults and outside support, undermining prospects for strong adult/youth partnerships and youth-led, sustainable projects and community recovery.

Data, assessment and program planning systems often obscured attention to the rights of adolescents and youth. Efforts to quickly identify the number and situation of young people between the ages of 10 and 24 and engage them in program design and implementation were not systematic. Few agencies readily produced demographic data that disaggregated the age and sex of young people in or out of camps beyond the 0-4, 5-17 and 18-59 age categories used by UNHCR and other agencies. Data collected by sector also provided limited views of young people's concerns. Information regularly collected on education needs focused mainly on the number of "school-aged children," overlooking adolescents who missed out on primary school. Women's health and gender-based violence data focused mainly on females "15 and older," with few distinctions within or below this age range.

Situational analyses identifying the dynamics of young people's concerns as a basis for policy and program action were either delayed or not undertaken. Although UNICEF effectively engaged Kosovar refugee young people in protection assessments and activities in Albania, it later delayed a coordinated situational analysis of their post-conflict protection needs for more than eight months. Without strong, coordinated and timely situational analysis, programming in each conflict area was not sufficiently multi-sectoral or coordinated, losing opportunities to provide holistic support.

Rigid program requirements have also barred coherent support to young people. For example, the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) required that beneficiaries of their support to prevent child soldiering or to HIV/AIDS orphans be under the age 18. Older adolescents heading households thus could not receive support that would have lifted burdens from their younger siblings. Many former adolescent soldiers in the Sierra Leone DDR program also "aged out" of family tracing and reunification programs because they had turned 18.

Young people's participation in policy and program design and implementation is essential good practice. However, as young people prove themselves to be effective and essential actors in their communities, they run the risk of being given greater responsibility without corresponding support from adults. Partnerships between young people and adults must therefore affirm reciprocal and mutually supportive roles.

Data collection systems are still not standardized or utilized to account for young people in different stages of their childhood and youth, increasing their invisibility in humanitarian and reconstruction programming.

United Nations Consolidated Appeals (CAP) regularly solicit support for "child protection" programs, but similar requisitions for adolescents or youth are not typical. UNICEF Sierra Leone reported having a much easier time raising funds for "child protection" projects than for those characterized as "youth empowerment" programs.

Young People's Participation

"Just being able to speak to other girls about our problems is a major impact of our work because girls here are taught to be very quiet, even though our needs are great."
—Betty, 16, northern Uganda

When young people are involved as leaders in assessments, advocacy and programs of action, a chain reaction of change is set in motion that not only helps protect the rights of the small numbers of young people involved in specific tasks but, with continued support, ignites a fire of constructive societal change.

When young people were directly involved in discerning their own needs and informing solutions to improve their lives, they were better equipped and more inspired to work to improve their lives, creating a ripple effect of motivation and constructive individual and group action. Although the Women's Commission did not set out to foster the creation of youth organizations, many young people involved in Women's Commission studies spontaneously chose to form them on their own in each site. They were so inspired by their work and initial engagement in decision-making that they worked together, developed plans, raised funds and reached out to their peers and others to make changes in their communities.

As a result of having successfully accomplished their work with the Women's Commission, these young people boosted not only their own standing in their communities, but improved the status of all other young people in the process by providing positive examples of youth achievement. As advocates and knowledgeable public speakers with reports of their work and certificates legitimizing their participation, they secured greater access to community adults, policy-makers, donors and the international community at large.

Young people overwhelmingly said that the potential to contribute productively to their societies over time as leaders depended upon sustained support—that was neither controlling nor manipulative—from caring adults. They also stressed the need for young people to be committed to building partnerships with their peers instead of being divided in times of difficulty.

A process of trust-building progressed when adults partnered constructively with young people and young people's access to decision-making processes increased. In northern Uganda, doors that were previously closed to young people opened when they arrived with a new study, organized and prepared to speak constructively and with authority. As articulate spokespeople with solutions to offer, young people now have better direct access to local government decision-makers, although they report that securing adult action remains a challenge. Transparency that can help minimize corruption and the manipulation of young people also increased through young people's collaboration with adults. New understandings emerged about the changing roles of adolescents, youth and adults that allowed for healing and new development. Young people said they would employ the skills, experience and commitment they developed through research, advocacy and program action long into the future.

Young people took risks when they chose to participate in humanitarian action and advocacy initiatives, engaging with adults in ways that directly countered commonly held beliefs about young people's capacities and roles. They risked failure, stigma, violent backlash, rejection, disappointment, disillusionment and further manipulation. At times, they directly confronted physical insecurity, as was the case with the Albanians and Serbs who reached out to one another in Kosovo to work on projects together at the risk of violent community reprisals. In Uganda, managing project funds together produced conflict among young people, but also provided them with important opportunities to learn to resolve differences and develop functional youth-led systems that would create opportunities for additional control over projects and decision-making. In the end, however, most young people eagerly confronted and overcame these and other obstacles, convinced that they were taking worthwhile risks in an attempt to improve their lives in an environment where they were already

coping with an array of abuses and disenfranchisement by adults. Ultimately, they believed in themselves and felt they had important solutions to offer.[37]

Young people overwhelmingly said that the potential to contribute productively to their societies over time as leaders depended upon sustained support from caring adults that was not controlling or manipulative. They also stressed the need for young people to be committed to building partnerships with their peers instead of being divided in times of difficulty.

Young people in emergencies and post-conflict said they undertook research, advocacy and engaged in humanitarian programs to:
- overcome boredom, and to distract themselves from thoughts of war and loss
- make friends
- connect with the international community
- gain status and a sense of belonging/inclusion as part of a group
- help themselves and their communities
- develop leadership, research and other skills

They said they emerged with:
- increased self-esteem
- communication and social skills
- knowledge about themselves and their peers and community
- solutions and ideas for action
- connections to one another and key adults
- improved community status
- a sense of identity and direction
- a sense of being better understood by some adults

The Impact of Young People's Participation

As a result of the research conducted by young people from Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone, awareness of the rights and capacities of young people among governmental, nongovernmental and United Nations decision-makers has dramatically increased. For example, the UN Secretary-General has cited their work and messages in reports to the General Assembly, and the U.S. State Department has brought their advocacy issues to the attention of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Furthermore, the programs, policies and systems shaped by young researchers' recommendations more accurately reflected the realities they faced, and directly challenged the social dislocation and abuses they experienced.

The following examples highlight just some of the many impacts of young people's participation and leadership:

- The United Nations Security Council incorporated the recommendations of adolescents in Sierra Leone on HIV/AIDS and sexual exploitation of children by aid workers into Resolution 1460 (on Children and Armed Conflict), paras 10-11.
- The research conducted by young people from Kosovo was used as part of a pilot project by the International Rescue Committee, which raised funds for and led to the implementation of a $1 million Civic Participation Initiative involving young people across Kosovo.
- The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) used the research conducted by Kosovar youth to raise money for youth programming in Kosovo, and with the International Rescue Committee, launched a National Youth Congress to help shape national youth policy.
- The Danish donor agency Danida responded to the recommendations of the Ugandan research team by working with young people and community leaders in northern Uganda to design and implement a new Acholi Education Initiative, providing secondary schooling to hundreds of adolescents affected by the war.
- The U.S. Department of Labor launched a $3 million adolescent education program to counter harmful child and youth labor practices in northern Uganda, responding to issues raised by young people in their research.
- The Ugandan government-led Psychosocial Core Team instituted a policy to incorporate adolescents as a major focus of programs run by organizations assisting children in the conflict.
- Groups of young people who collaborated with the Women's Commission on its research in Uganda went on to form three youth NGOs in separate districts and raise funds for their work to increase HIV/AIDS awareness among their peers and conduct advocacy for adolescents' reproductive rights, gender equality, peace and humanitarian assistance.
- Dozens of young people gained access to high-level policy discussions at the Winnipeg Conference on War-affected Children in September 2000, the United Nations Special Session on Children in May 2002 and other international meetings, where their voices were heard and policies of inclusion for young people were strengthened as a result.
- After the Winnipeg conference, the Canadian government went on to work closely with young people who had participated in the Women's Commission research team in Kosovo, and involved them as advisers in a national teacher training program.

The Voices of Young Researchers

Dafina, Emmanuel and Ngolo are just three of the thousands of war-affected young people who worked together in Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone as researchers and youth advisers in collaboration with the Women's Commission. They themselves collected much of the information in this report through numerous interviews with their peers—most of whom had never before been given the opportunity to share their opinions on issues of concern to them. Making the most of their first opportunity to articulate their concerns, young people identified in detail the cycle of violence, lack of social and economic support and lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making that undermine their well-being.

Kosovo

"**I** was not really very interested in doing the study at first. There were 1,500 people missing from our town in western Kosova, so much had been destroyed, and I wasn't sure it would be useful. But once we got started, we didn't want to stop.

"We went all over our region and asked other young people about their lives. They said things like, 'NATO is here now, and the war is supposed to be over, but there are few police, no laws and no protection... Boys are bringing guns into school, and no one is stopping them… Every night there is machine gun fire… I don't know if my brother who went missing in the war is alive or dead… What if the Serbs come back? What if it's not over?….' A year later, we met young Serbs who had done similar work on another adolescent research team and learned that they were also afraid. Some were separated from family and worried about those missing and about their futures. They had been attacked regularly in the months following the war, with bombs sent into their enclave. We were all very angry, at each other and at the situation.

"The research team I was on took action. We did an anti-hate graffiti campaign and painted over hateful ethnic slurs still left written on walls since the war. We helped secondary school students organize student governments. We ran creative classes for Roma girls to try to increase their interest in education; even after we stopped, they showed up every day, wanting more and bringing their sisters along. We worked with the Serb young people on a youth advocacy project. We pushed youth issues with government officials, who were not used to young people taking action or having opinions about their work.

"Although sometimes it seems as if things haven't changed much, I know they really have because I myself have changed. With my friends, we have made a big difference in Kosova. I used to see young people as only a simple part of the population, a part of everyday life. Today I see that young people have one of the most important political, educational and cultural roles in the community of a nation. As a minority Roma living among Albanians, I can say that we tried to cooperate with adolescents of other ethnic groups and that young people can make a difference taking steps to create a better life together even though true peace is still not certain. If young people are healthy, then the future of the nation is healthy."
> – Dafina was 16 when she first worked with the Kosovar Youth Council (KYC) and the Women's Commission to lead a study with her peers in 1999.

Northern Uganda

"I was abducted twice by the rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the first time when I was 13. All young people in northern Uganda have lived with this same fear for almost as long as we have been alive. The war in our homeland began not long after we were born, and young people have been the main targets for violence. I was lucky to escape captivity, but thousands of other young people have experienced much worse. They have been forced by the LRA to kill one another and their families and endure rape and life for years in the bush without medical or other care.

"Hundreds of young people we interviewed in our communities said that a combination of war, massive displacement, HIV/AIDS, being orphaned, lack of economic development and poverty has created a world of unimaginable misery. Instead of being protected from abduction and abuse, girls have been raped by government soldiers and others, and their families have forced them to marry young. Few young people have been able to go to school because of the insecurity and extreme costs. Without peace, education and better skills to make decisions ourselves, young people feel helpless and hopeless about the future.

"Doing this research and advocacy afterwards has increased my understanding of many things, especially gender and development issues and how young people must be a central part of constructively changing our communities. For example, I realized that we are addressing only the effects but not the causes of gender discrimination. I worked with some of the other adolescents who were researchers to form one of the first youth organizations in our town. Our group, Gulu Youth for Action (GYFA) is working to sensitize other young people to the causes of gender inequality, not just the responses. For girls, especially, having opportunities to speak to one another and discuss their concerns has been a major accomplishment. When young people have more self-confidence and opportunities to express our views, we will be able to protect ourselves and transform our communities."

> – Emmanuel is a co-founder of GYFA, a youth-run education and advocacy group in northern Uganda formed by research team members involved in the adolescent study with the Women's Commission.

Sierra Leone

"By the time I began helping adolescents design and conduct research with their peers throughout the Western Region of Sierra Leone as part of the project with the Women's Commission, I had been a student, a teacher and a youth activist. But this was the first time I had ever seen young people supported to lead and really own research and do advocacy together. They rose to the challenge. Many of the young people on our research team were like the hundreds they interviewed, who had not been to school in years due to the conflict. Young people were angry and frustrated that their concerns about lack of education, health care and jobs were not being adequately addressed. Without support for their basic material needs, abuses against them continued. Many girls were engaged in prostitution in order to survive, and young people were exposed to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Young people had few opportunities to shape government and community decision-making, and they felt highly marginalized. Former rebel fighters warned of a return to conflict unless their voices and concerns were heard and addressed.

"All of the youth organizations involved in the adolescent research worked with young people to take their findings to decision-makers. Some even spoke to the UN Security Council, who included their recommendations to recognize HIV/AIDS as a peace and security issue in Security Council Resolution 1460. We have made further progress achieving a national youth policy and engaging young people in reconciliation and economic recovery work."
– Ngolo is the national coordinator for the Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA), an organization created to improve the work of Sierra Leone's youth groups.[38] He was one of the youth coordinators for the adolescent research project in Sierra Leone.

Practical Ways Forward

Through their studies, young people described how multiple and overlapping actors and factors support or undermine their protection and well-being during and after armed conflict. Although they outlined many gaps, they also provided solutions and described how a range of creative actions taken with caring adults at different phases of emergencies have made significant differences in improving their lives.

Programs supporting young people must respond to the diverse dynamics of their lives from early adolescence through young adulthood. They must be: innovative, youth-driven, community-based and inclusive.

Young people's research revealed that common approaches are needed to ensure their protection, but they must be adapted to address varied circumstances.

Measurements of success must be seen in a larger context of social change. Although psychosocial and safe space interventions in refugee camps are immediately protective, they also prepare young people for returns home, leadership roles and other responsibilities. The full impact of youth programs and young people's participation can only be measured incrementally over time. Accountability structures to ensure young people's protection need urgent development and activation.

INDICATORS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROTECTION IN ARMED CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT

Young people say their well-being is dependent upon:

❑ Peace
❑ Freedom from violence
❑ Opportunities to learn and access appropriate education
❑ Freedom from being forced into armed forces
❑ Freedom of movement
❑ Safe spaces for discussion and interaction with others
❑ Gender equality within the home and society
❑ Supportive parental care or adult assistance, acceptance and love
❑ Adequate, clean, nutritious and easily accessible food and water
❑ Clean, safe and adequate housing
❑ A safe and healthy working environment
❑ Access to health care, including reproductive health care
❑ Freedom from sexual violence and exploitation
❑ Life skills—communication, social, negotiation, decision-making
❑ Opportunities to develop leadership skills
❑ Ability to make choices
❑ A clear and healthy identity
❑ Spiritual freedom
❑ Opportunities for recreation and creative expression
❑ Freedom to choose one's relationships with others
❑ Friends and peer support
❑ Self-reliance
❑ Opportunities to participate in decision-making and other processes, where participation goes beyond consultation to leadership
❑ Full access to community and government leaders
❑ Knowledge that they have a right to all of the above

Education secured peace, protection and a new start in life for young people.

Thousands of adolescents and youth obtained formal education and skills training in Sierra Leone through an internationally funded program to help them demobilize from fighting forces. Although many, especially girls, fell through the cracks, those who did not received a direct alternative to war, a new identity and emerging skills to survive and rebuild their country as important members of society.

Youth-to-youth activism engaged, protected and prepared refugee young people for safe returns home.

UNICEF worked in partnership with the Albanian Youth Council to involve thousands of Kosovar refugee young people in camps in Albania in weekly discussions to identify and seek resolutions to problems. Youth themselves then decided to organize sports tournaments, concerts, camp clean-ups and fundraising activities for the economically poorest families. They also established schools, disseminated landmine information, improved camp security and organized psychosocial activities for young children. Not only did young people act as effective protection monitors during the crisis, they returned home with skills and the motivation to contribute to recovery. Thanks to the young people's skill and dedication during the crisis, aid groups increased their outreach capacity enormously, which later resulted in an overall reduction of landmine incidents, among other achievements.

Government outreach to youth redressed manipulation, marginalization and corruption to prevent conflict and the degradation of young people.

The new Minister of Youth and Sport in post-war Sierra Leone, Dennis Bright, traveled around the country to listen to and engage with young people who harbored a profound mistrust of government and felt marginalized by political processes. He confronted corruption in the use of government resources in order to improve the functioning of services for young people, and for the first time gave young people and their organizations more direct access to governmental decision-making processes. He reached out to international donors and encouraged their investment in concrete economic opportunities for young people, with a view to engaging disaffected youth, combating exploitation and thereby preventing further conflict. Through his collaborative approach, young people saw the enactment of a long-awaited National Youth Policy (NYP) in June 2003.

Parents secured community acceptance and international support for formerly abducted young people.

The local northern Ugandan NGO, the Concerned Parents Association (CPA), set a global standard for mobilizing communities to advocate for the acceptance, recovery and reintegration of formerly abducted child and adolescent soldiers. Parents who lost their children to abduction came together to call for a peaceful solution to the conflict and developed networks to help families and communities accept and prepare for the return of their abducted children and to heal from the ongoing social upheaval they endure. Working together as the CPA, parents undertook international advocacy campaigns and won international support for systematic reunification, health and psychosocial services for thousands of formerly abducted young people.

Issue Information Sheets

In January 2000, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (Women's Commission) released the report *Untapped Potential: Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict*, which described some achievements and major gaps in support for the rights of refugee, internally displaced, returnee and other adolescents in emergencies and post-conflict situations.

The Women's Commission followed this work with a series of field-based, action-oriented studies designed and led by adolescent research teams to build on the findings of *Untapped Potential*. In all, more than 2,300 adolescents, youth and adults in Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone participated in these studies, and many among them became involved in intensive follow-up advocacy and related programs. Young people interviewed their peers about a range of issues to answer questions central to this research: What are the chief problems of adolescents in your society? What are some solutions to these problems?

The following issue information sheets provide an overview of the problems and challenges young people face in armed conflict and post-conflict in ten issue areas, as well as solutions, many of them youth-driven, for addressing them. Each issue information sheet comprises "Issues and Trends," "Promising Practices," "Learning from Experience" and "Take Action." The ten issue areas are:
  ➤ Adolescent and youth education in emergencies;
  ➤ Young people's livelihood;
  ➤ Reproductive health for young people;
  ➤ HIV/AIDS and young people;
  ➤ Gender-based violence against young people;
  ➤ Adolescent-headed households;
  ➤ Separated adolescents;
  ➤ Reintegrating young people formerly with fighting forces;
  ➤ Adolescent- and youth-friendly spaces;
  ➤ Young people's participation.

The Women's Commission and the young people it worked with call on the full range of stakeholders and actors—governments, NGOs, UN, community adults and young people themselves—to take action now and work together to address these issues. The Women's Commission hopes that these issue information sheets will act as a useful guide in laying out the problems and suggesting some solutions.

To read Issue Information Sheets, please visit http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/cap_ones.pdf.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Forming the Research Teams

The participatory research was conducted similarly in each site. The following provides a description of how it was planned and carried out in Sierra Leone. As much as possible, the Women's Commission tried to involve key adult stakeholders to facilitate and take an interest in the young people's work, without controlling it. Where feasible, youth organizations were engaged as coordinators to support the capacity of young people and provide focal points for follow-up action. For more detailed information about the methodologies used in each area, see the relevant reports.

The Sierra Leone Example

Fifty-one Sierra Leonean adolescents living in Freetown and Makeni, Sierra Leone, participated as "adolescent researchers" in the study that led to the production of *Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone.* They were the principal researchers, in collaboration with the Women's Commission. They designed and shaped their methodology, organized and conducted the research, and analyzed and reported their findings. They went on to conduct advocacy based on these findings with the Women's Commission, their adult advisers and the youth coordination groups involved in facilitating their work, as well as with other interested groups and individuals.

The young people worked on two separate teams, one in Freetown, known as the Freetown team, and one in Makeni, known as the Makeni team, with 27 and 24 adolescent researchers respectively. Seventeen adults serving as "research advisers" assisted them in their responsibilities—eight on the Freetown team and nine on the Makeni team. A total of seven local NGOs coordinated the work of the two teams—four in Freetown and three in Makeni. Each of these two groupings formed a "youth coordination group" (YCG). Thus, one YCG assisted adolescents and adults carry out the work in Freetown, and another facilitated those in Makeni. These entities acted as sub-grantees of the Women's Commission and administered the research project funds. Six of the seven organizations were youth-run NGOs and the another was a women's NGO. (Compared to Kosovo and northern Uganda, it was unusual to have multiple youth groups acting as a single YCG, but given the high level of youth organizing in Sierra Leone, the young people felt collaboration was imperative.)

Key Objectives

The objective of the teams' work was to identify and investigate key issues facing adolescents in their communities and to identify solutions for these concerns. The results of their work are being used for advocacy purposes, to bring international, national and local attention to adolescent and youth concerns in Sierra Leone and the surrounding region. Their recommendations are informing decisions made about programs and policies implemented in Sierra Leone, including strengthening current efforts and implementing new pilot projects for young people that *involve* young people. It was also hoped, although not assumed, that the process will inspire young people and provide them with ideas about ways they can take action on their own behalf, with or without help from adults.

Prior to beginning the work, Women's Commission staff traveled to each research site with descriptions of the potential project to identify groups and individuals that might be interested in participating and begin to shape their focus and locations. After detailed discussions with young people, United Nations agencies, international and local nongovernmental organizations, government officials and community adults, the Women's Commission drafted terms of reference (TOR) based on these possibilities. The Women's Commission left the new YCG partners in March with basic guidelines and mutually agreed upon criteria for selecting adolescent researchers and adult research advisers according to the TOR for each function. The YCGs had a month to organize themselves and the teams in order to begin research in April 2002.

Diversity was a key criterion for choosing adolescent researchers. While no one person can fully represent an entire group, attention was paid to ensure the representation of a wide range of experiences and perspectives of young

people. This gave researchers strong opportunities to learn from one another and their adult advisers, so that their ideas for eventual outreach would be comprehensive. In both areas, YCGs engaged youth and women's group networks to identify and choose adolescent researchers. YCGs provided these groups and other key community people, such as headmasters, with the adolescent researcher TOR. Nominations were received and narrowed down by the YCGs and other young people, according to the criteria.

Ultimately, adolescent researchers were of both sexes, aged from 14 to 22 years. They included: child mothers; those formerly with the Revolutionary United Front; those formerly with civil defense forces (CDF); internally displaced; former refugees; former commercial sex workers; adolescents living in or out of camps and in town or in villages; those orphaned by war; students and out-of-school youth; working youth; adolescents with disabilities; a young tribal chief; and youth activists (e.g., part of a youth organization). A strong effort was made to limit the number of experienced youth activists on the team while reaching out to more marginalized young people. Thus, some adolescents on the team were also representing their youth groups and would be able to bring their experiences back to the group, while others were learning about being part of a group activity for the first time. Adult advisers were chosen in much the same way. They included both males and females with a commitment to and/or experience working with young people. They were respected members of the community, including parents and teachers.

Designing, Organizing and Implementing the Research

Each team participated in a three-day training, where Women's Commission researchers and local professionals guided them through a process of identifying their purpose as a team, learning about research methodologies and developing and practicing their methodology. The Women's Commission provided a framework for the researchers, suggesting a few general questions to guide their work: "What are the main problems of adolescents in Sierra Leone, and what are some solutions?" and "Who are 'adolescents' and 'youth' in Sierra Leone today?"

First, the teams worked together to decide for themselves why these questions would be of interest to them and to develop statements of purpose. Then they spent a day and a half identifying and developing detailed questions about related topics for discussion with their peers. A sample statement of purpose, from the Makeni team, was: "We are conducting this research in order to find out more about adolescents' problems and identify solutions and recommendations for subsequent implementation, so that future generations will not face such problems."[39]

In the second half of the training, the teams learned about, shaped and practiced different research methods. Following a suggestion made by the Women's Commission, the teams chose to undertake a combination of focus group discussions, individual case studies and a survey of top adolescent concerns, which they designed and tested themselves. The focus groups provide an overall qualitative look at the range of issues of concern to adolescents and details about these concerns. The case studies provide a more detailed look at specific issues uncovered, and the surveys help identify the relative importance of the range of issues described. They practiced leading discussions and taking detailed notes, incorporating interviewing ethics agreed upon in the training. As the final activity of the training, researchers devised a detailed research plan, deciding whom they wanted to speak to, where and how they would organize themselves. They also designed team t-shirts, which they would wear while researching. After the training, the teams conducted their research for roughly three weeks, followed by a week of analysis and two weeks of drafting a short team report.

Focus groups and surveys were carried out by smaller groups of the larger research team and included two to four adolescent researchers, accompanied by one adult research adviser. The adolescent researchers in these small groups took the lead explaining the project to participants, posing questions, generating dialogue, taking notes and administering the survey. Following the sessions, the adolescents wrote up summaries of the overall findings of the sessions. Adults acted as guides, helped the young people to organize themselves and endeavored to intervene only when needed. Adolescent researchers acted individually to invite research participants to be interviewed separately for case studies. These interviews at times lasted several hours, following which the adolescent researchers wrote written reports of their case studies.

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Each focus group/survey session aimed to involve no more than eight to ten people to provide ample opportunities for individuals to speak. Sessions were conducted in the language of choice of the participants, mainly Krio in Freetown and Temne or Krio in Makeni. Although the length of the sessions varied, in general the groups spent an hour and a half talking in the focus groups and then half an hour filling out the concerns surveys. Attendance at the sessions was voluntary for participants, and they were informed that their testimony might be used in printed reports, but that their identities would be kept confidential for their protection. The taking and publication of photos or video was only permitted with the verbal agreement of the research participants.

Appendix 2: Practical Resources

Action for the Rights of Children (2001)
UNHCR and the International Save the Children Alliance
http://www.unhcr.org.uk/youth/legalstatus.htm

Activism Guide and Links: *The Body: An AIDS and HIV Information Resource*
http://www.thebody.com/govt/activist.html

Adolescent Reproductive Health in Refugee Settings (2003)
Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium
http://www.rerc.org/pdf/adolesce.pdf

Advocating for Adolescent Reproductive Health: Addressing Cultural Sensitivities (2000)
FOCUS
http://www.pathfind.org/pf/pubs/focus/IN%20FOCUS/nov_2000.htm

Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents, Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Ugandan and Sudanese Adolescents in Northern Uganda (2001)
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
http://www.womenscommission.org/projects/children/ug_prs.htm

A Kind of Friendship: Working for and with War-affected Children and Youth (2003)
Children/Youth as Peacebuilders
Ldale@web.ca

Children & Youth as Peacebuilders: A Resource Manual (2003)
Children/Youth as Peacebuilders
Ldale@web.ca

Child Soldiers: Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies – A Field Guide
Youth: Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies – A Field Guide
Education: Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies – A Field Guide
Save the Children/USA

Clinic Assessment of Youth Friendly Services: A Tool for Assessing and Improving Reproductive Health Services for Youth (2002)
Pathfinder International
http://www.pathfind.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Publications_Programmatic

Education in Emergencies: A Tool Kit for Starting and Managing Education in Emergencies
Save the Children/UK
http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk/jsp/resources/home.jsp?section=education

Fending for Themselves: Afghan Refugee Children and Adolescents Working in Urban Pakistan (2002)
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/af_chil.pdf

Helping Children Outgrow War (2002)
US Agency for International Development

http://www.USAID.gov/regions/afr/pubs

Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies Website
http://ineesite.org/

Intervention Strategies That Work for Youth: Summary of FOCUS on Young Adults and of Program Report (2002)
Family Health International
http://www.fhi.org/en/Youth/YouthNet/Publications/YouthIssuesPapers.htm

Making the Choice for A Better Life: Promoting The Protection and Capacity of Kosovo's Youth (2000)
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
http://www.womenscommission.org/projects/children/Kosovo.htm

Map of Programs for Adolescent Participation During Situations of Conflict and Post-Conflict (2003)
UNICEF
http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_14817.html

Meeting the Needs of Young Clients: A Guide to Providing Reproductive Health Services to Adolescents (2000)
Family Health International
http://www.fhi.org/en/rh/pubs/servdelivery/adolguide/index.htm

Precious Resources: Adolescents in The Reconstruction of Sierra Leone (2002)
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/sl/index.html

Psychosocial Intervention in Complex Emergencies: A Conceptual Framework
The Psychosocial Working Group (PWG)
http://www.forcedmigration.org/psychosocial/papers/Conceptual%20Framework.pdf

Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care (1994)
UNHCR
http://www.unhcr.org.uk/youth/legalstatus.htm

Reproductive Health Care in Refugee Settings (2002)
Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium (now the Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium)
http://www.rhrc.org/resources/general_fieldtools/index.html

Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations: An Inter-agency Field Manual (1999)
Inter-agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations
www.rhrc.org/resources/general_fieldtools/iafm_menu.htm

The Role of Education in Protecting Children in Conflict (2003)
Susan Nicolai and Carl Triplehorn
http://www.odihpn.org/pdfbin/networkpaper042.pdf

The Participation Rights of Adolescents: A Strategic Approach (2003)
UNICEF

http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/Participation_Rights_of_Adolescents_Rajani_2001.pdf

The Young Person's Guide to the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child and Sexual and Reproductive Health
International Planned Parenthood Federation. Leaflet
http://www.ippf.org/youth/pdf/young_people.pdf

Untapped Potential: Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict – A Review of Programs and Policies
(2000)
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/adol2.pdf

User-Friendly Adolescent Document and Poster: Work with Adolescent Refugees: It's their Right and Your Duty
UNHCR and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
http://www.rhrc.org/pdf/unhcr_paper_new.pdf

Work with Young Refugees to Ensure Their Reproductive Health and Well-being: It's Their Right and Our Duty, A Field Resource for Programming with and for Refugee Adolescents and Youth
(2002)
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/ad_hiv.pdf

Youth Lens on Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS, an information series (2003)
YouthNet
http://fhi.org/youthnet

Your Comments Count
International Planned Parenthood Federation
http://www.ippf.org/youth/pdf/english_leaflet.pdf

Notes

[1] Carl Triplehorn. This number was developed by cross referencing an adapted list of conflict affected countries in Sommers (2002) and information on the Youth at the UN. 2003, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/index.html .

[2] Amir Haxhikadrija, youth adviser, Kosovo.

[3] Calculations derived from the IDB Population Pyramids northern Uganda, http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbpyr.html -- 2001.

[4] Calculations derived from the IDB Population Pyramids northern Sierra Leone, http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbpyr.html – 2002.

[5] Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict Report. Issue #1 (and Update) Afghanistan 2001.

[6] The Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-government in Kosovo (Rambouillet, France) of February 23, 1999 and the Military Technical Agreement of June 9, 1999.

[7] Under Ugandan law, "defilement" includes any sexual contact outside of marriage involving girls younger than 18 years of age, regardless of consent or the age of the perpetrator. While defilement carries a maximum sentence of death, that punishment has never been given to a convicted rapist. Violence against women, including rape, remains common. Polygamy is legal under both customary and Islamic law, and a wife has no legal status to prevent her husband from marrying another woman. Men may also "inherit" the widows of their deceased brothers. From: *AFROL Gender Profiles: Uganda,* AFROL, undated, <www.afrol.com/Categories/Women/profiles/uganda_women.htm>. The words "rape" and "defilement" are used interchangeably by members of the community, e.g., by the media, and even in legal terminology, as failure to pay a dowry is regarded as rape by the family of the woman.

[8] This chart synthesizes the results of concerns surveys designed and conducted by young people in Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone as part of the Women's Commission participatory research studies; see www.womenscommission.org for the reports *Making the Choice for a Better Life*, *Against All Odds* and *Precious Resources*. The "Categories of Young People's Concerns" represented here synthesize main themes emerging across each survey area. (The original surveys were not directly comparable by category across conflict areas, as young people were given the freedom to name concerns as specifically as they chose to, and thus each survey differed from site to site). The "'overarching concern" categories were chosen by the Women's Commission and represent the following concerns as named in the original surveys. Note that many of the concerns could be swapped under the various headings, but were organized according to the principal meanings conveyed by the young respondents. The "Gender issues" category duplicates gender-related concerns that are also represented under other categories to provide a look at how they would be represented if they stood alone. The height of the bars does not fully correspond to average numeric scores calculated in the original surveys and instead represents the top concerns expressed in each area. **Violence and Insecurity:** Adolescent violence and crime, delinquency and vandalism; Child abuse; Insecurity, abductions and murder; Kidnapping, trafficking, sexual violence and exploitation; Limited freedom of movement; Prevalence of guns and other weapons such as landmines; Rape and defilement, sexual violence; Violence and insecurity; **Education:** Getting an education; Lack of educational opportunities; **Economic and Material Needs:** Jobs for adolescents/youth; Jobs for parents/adults; Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing; Poverty; Prostitution; Shelter, water, electricity; Unemployment; **Psychosocial:** Being orphaned; Cultural breakdown and immorality; Early and/or forced marriage; Family separations; Hopelessness; Lack of parental/family/home care; Loss of family/friends; Reintegrating into society after war; Trauma and psychological problems because of war; Uncertainty about the future; **Health:** Alcohol and drug abuse; Disability (loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.); Drug abuse and addiction; HIV/AIDS and STIs; Illness; Lack of health care; Teen and unwanted pregnancy; **Displacement:** Displacement; **Gender Issues:** Early or forced marriage; Gender equality; Kidnapping, trafficking and exploitation; Prostitution; Rape and defilement; Sexual violence; **Social Roles and Relationships:** Family relationships, generation gap; Government neglect of youth concerns; Lack of communication and understanding between youth and parents, elders, community; Lack of participation in decision-making; Sex.

[9] *Global Survey on Education in Emergencies*, Women's Commission, 2004, p. iv.

[10] *Global Survey on Education in Emergencies*, Women's Commission, 2004, p. iii.

[11] *Global Survey on Education in Emergencies*, Women's Commission, 2004, p. iii.

[12] Calculations derived from the University of New Mexico database using figures for 2001. http://www.unm.edu/~bber/econ/us-pci.htm.

[13] *Making the Choice for a Better Life: Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Kosovo's Youth,* Women's Commission, 2001, p. 19.

[14] For example from governments, Education for All, the CRC, etc.

[15] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Education indicators, UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1996; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, http://portal.unesco.org/uis/ev.php?URL_ID=5187&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201. Last accessed: November 20, 2003. Figures derived from chart entitled "Gross Enrolment Ratio, Secondary, Female," 2000-2001.

[16] Recognizing that gender-based violence continues to impede women's ability to enjoy their rights, and that sanitary materials are central to women's dignity and health, UNHCR, in its *Five Commitments to Refugee Women* (June 2001) calls for "the provision of sanitary materials to all women and girls of concern" to become standard practice in all UNHCR assistance programs. See www.refugeesinternational.org for further information.

[17] Women's Commission interview, Sierra Leone, April 2002.

[18] Richardson, John. *Youth in Kosovo, A Situation Analysis*, UNICEF, in cooperation with UNMIK Department of Youth, 2000.

[19] Save the Children UK (STC-UK) and UNHCR, *Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, Report of Assessment Mission Carried Out from October 22 to November 30, 2001*, January 2002.

[20] Compiled from the three Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children reports (Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone)

[21] *Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents - Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Ugandan and Sudanese Adolescents in Northern Uganda*, Women's Commission, 2001, p. 26.

[22] Women's Commission interview with Dr. Shirazi, Medical Officer for the Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, May 20, 2001. For more information, see *Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents*, Women's Commission, 2001, p. 37.

[23] *Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity in Crisis*, UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO, p.42.

[24] Women's Commission interview, Freetown, April 15, 2002; U.S. Department of State, 1998 Human Rights Report: Sierra Leone, 1998.

[25] American Refugee Committee (ARC), *ARC Strengthening AIDS Prevention in Port Loko,* Baseline Survey Report: HIV/AIDS/STI KAP survey among commercial sex workers, military and youth in Port Loko, Sierra Leone, RHR Consortium Monitoring and Evaluation Program, September 2001.

[26] Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), "*Women's safe delivery in Sierra Leone*," CIDA Update, September 2002, http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/newsro-e.htm.

[27] Children are cut on the temples of their heads close to the veins so that the "brown-brown" can be poured directly into the openings. Source: http://www.freethechildren.org/peace/childrenandwar/slfact.html.

[28] Triplehorn.

[29] Rädda Barnen, Children in War Database, www.rb.se/childwardatabase. The IOM in Kosovo had registered 16,024 ex-KLA soldiers as of October 20, 1999, 10 percent of them under the age of 18. Young people in this age group were approximately 17 percent of the more than 1 million young people under 24 living in the territory.

[30] Ibid.

[31] *Making the Choice for a Better Life: Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Kosovo's Youth,* Women's Commission, 2001, p. 19.

[32] Figures taken from UNICEF/Uganda report: *Abductions in Northern and Southwestern Uganda: 1986-2001*, November 2001, p.5.

[33] Ibid., p. 6.

[34] As of October 2003, approximately 6,800 children had been abducted since June 2002. This figure, provided by UNICEF, is conservative, as UNICEF did not have an effective registration system in the affected areas in Teso at the time of this communication. (Figure provided by Mads Oyen, via email, October 7, 2003.) As of July 2000, 14,000 children had been abducted, according to UNICEF, as cited in the July 6, 2000 resolution adopted by the European Parliament on the abduction of children by the Lord's Resistance Army, http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/0/7792c3c28786424cc125691a005248cb?OpenDocument

[35] USCR Country Report Sierra Leone, 1999, http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/africa/1999/sierra_leone.htm

[36] Sierra Leone Humanitarian Report. UNHCR, April 16-30, 1998, http://www.cidi.org/humanitarian/hsr/98a/0026.html.

[37] Young people involved in the Women's Commission studies confronted many risks in their work, and with help from their peers and all adults involved, worked through these challenges. Where young people who were interviewed or conducted interviews might have needed special support dealing with painful feelings, the groups were prepared to support them with empathy and follow-up counseling if needed. The latter was never needed, in part, because of the strategic decisions the young people made about how to ask questions ethically, sensitively, in confidence, through listening without judgment and by following through and taking action to convey the concerns expressed to decision-makers.

[38] Women's Commission interviews, October 2003.

[39] Makeni research team statement of purpose developed in Makeni training, April 12, 2002.