

Youth in Conflict and Peacebuilding

Alpaslan Özerdem
and
Sukanya Podder

Mobilization, Reintegration and
Reconciliation



Youth in Conflict and Peacebuilding

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Alpaslan Özerdem

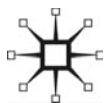
*Professor of Peacebuilding and Co-Director of the Centre for Trust,
Peace and Social Relations (CTPSR), Coventry University, UK*

and

Sukanya Podder

*Assistant Professor, Centre for International Security and Resilience (CISR),
Cranfield University, UK*

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This book is dedicated to our fathers, Hasan Hüseyin Özerdem and Badal Podder, respectively, who have made a great success out of huge adversities in their lives. Youth experiences during conflict and peacebuilding resonates the same hope and positive thinking. It reminds us of the need to acknowledge and celebrate the resilience and potential of young people both in war and peace.

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List of Abbreviations

AAs	Assembly Areas
AAL	Action Aid Liberia
ACI	African Concern International
AD	Ancestral Domain
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AEL	Association of Evangelicals of Liberia
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AGRHA	Action for Greater Harvest
ALIVE	Arabic Languages and Islamic Values Education
ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
AME	African Methodist Episcopal
ANBP	Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme
APWE	Patriotic Alliance of the Wé People
ARMM	Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
ATU	Anti-terrorist Unit
AUC	United Self Defence Forces of Colombia
BARIL	Bring a Rifle and Improve your Livelihood
BDF	Bong Defence Force
BDS	Business Development Skills
BIAF	Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BMLO	Bangsamoro Liberation Organization
CAAs	CAFGU Auxiliaries
CAFF	Children Associated with Fighting Forces
CAGFU	Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit
CAP	Children's Assistance Program
CAR	Central African Republic
CARERE	Cambodia Area Rehabilitation and Regeneration Project
CBA	Cordillera Bodong Administration
CBR	Community-based Reintegration
CCA	Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement
CCF	Christian Children Fund
CCL	Calvary Chapel of Liberia
CDF	Civilian Defence Force
CEIP	Community Education Investment Programme

CJPS	Centre for Justice and Peace Studies
CNDD–FDD	National Council for the Defence of Democracy–Forces of Democracy
COHDA	Community Human Development Agency
CONADER	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion
CORE	Commission for Reintegration
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPAs	Child Protection Agencies
CPLA	Cordillera People’s Liberation Army
CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CREA	Creative Associates International
CRC	Convention of the Rights of the Child
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CTOs	Transit and Orientation Centres
CVOs	Civilian Voluntary Organizations
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
DAP	Disbursement Acceleration Program
DBH	Don Bosco Homes
DCOF	Displaced Children and Orphans Fund
DCR	Demobilization and Community Reintegration
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Union of West African States
EIWP	Employment Intensive Works Programmes
ELN	National Liberation Army
EOP	Economic Opportunities Programme
FAA	Armed Forces of Angola
FAFN	Forces Nouvelles
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FLGO	Liberation Front for the Great West
FLY	Federation of Liberian Youth
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
FPA	Final Peace Agreement

FRELIMO	The Liberation Front of Mozambique
G/WAFF	Girls/Women Associated with Fighting Forces
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
GoL	Government of Liberia
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
GPA	General Peace Agreement
GPH	Government of the Philippines
GRP	Government of the Republic of Philippines
GUSCO	Gulu Support the Children Organization
HHL	Helping Hand Liberia
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HRDP	Human Resource Development Programme
ICBF	Colombian Institute for Family Welfare
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICG	International Contact Group
ICRI	International Child Resource Exchange Institute
ICRS	Information, Counselling and Referral Services
ID	Identity Card
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Standards
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IECD	Integrated Early Childhood Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGOs	International Non-governmental Organizations
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IR	International Relations
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISP	Industry and Service Programme
JIU	Joint Implementation Unit
KI	Kapamagogopa Inc.
KIIs	Key informant interviews
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
LCI	Liberian Children's Initiative
LDF	Lofa Defence Force
LEAP	Liberian Employment Action Plan
LEEP	Liberia Emergency Employment Programme
LGUs	Local Governance Units
LNTG	Liberian National Transitional Government
LOIC	Liberia Opportunities Industrialization Center

LPC	Liberian Peace Council
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MADET	Mano Training and Development Foundation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDRP	Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MILOCI	Ivorian Liberation Movement for the West of Côte d'Ivoire
MIM	Muslim Independence Movement
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MNLF-RG	Moro National Liberation Front Revolutionary Group
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOA-AD	Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPIGO	Ivorian Popular Movement of the Great West
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
MSG	Management Steering Group
MTB	Mindanao Tulong Bakwet
NAEAL	National Adult Education Association of Liberia
NAFAPD	National Foundation against Poverty and Diseases
NCDDRR	National Commission for Disarmament Demobilization Rehabilitation and Reintegration
NEPI	National Ex-combatants' Peacebuilding Initiative
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NORAD	Norwegian Aid for Development Cooperation
NPA	New People's Army
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPFL/INPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia (Independent)
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NRDP	National Reconciliation and Development Program
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
OAS	Organization of American States
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference

ONUB	UN Operation in Burundi
ONUSAL	UN Observer Mission in El Salvador
OPAPP	Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process
OP-CRC	Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child
PBRC	Peacebuilding Resource Center
PCE	Post-conflict Environment
PCSUCS	Philippine Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
PDCs	Peace and Development Communities
PDR	Prevention, Demobilization and Reintegration
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PLT	Programme for Transference of Land
PNDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
PNO	Project New Outlook
PNP	Philippine National Police
PRC	People's Redemption Council
PRODERE	Programme for Refugees Displaced and Repatriated Persons in Central America
P/RRA	Participatory and Rapid Rural Appraisal
PTA	Parents' Teachers Association
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
RCD	Rally for Congolese Democracy
RECEIVE	Resource Center for Community Empowerment and Integrated Development
RENAMO	Mozambican National Resistance
RESPECT	Recovery Employment and Sustainability Programme for Ex-combatants and Communities in Timor-Leste
RPA-ABB	Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayo Brigade
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
RSM	Raja Solaiman Movement
RSS	Reintegration Support Scheme
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SDPs	Sustainable Development Promoters
SEARCH	Special Emergency Activity to Restore Children's Home
SERE	Special Emergency Relief for the Elderly
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SLFP	Sri Lankan Freedom Party
SMI	Solidarity Movement Inc.

SPDC	Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development
SPIR	Samaritan's Purse
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLA/M	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
SRP	Sinoe Rubber Plantation
SRSF	Special Regional Security Forces
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SSS	Special Security Services
SWAY	Support for War-affected Youths
SZOPAD	Southern Philippines Zone of Peace and Development
TEP	Training and Employment Programme
TISP	Transition Investment Support Plan
TMVP	Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TSA	Transitional Safety Allowance
TWP	True Whig Party
UC-ELN	Unión Camilista ELN
ULIMO-J	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (Johnson)
ULIMO-K	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (Kromah)
UN	United Nations
UNAMIS	UN Mission in Sudan
UNAMSIL	UN Mission in Sierra Leone
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNDHA	United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations' Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMILOBS	UNMIL Military Observers
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOHAC	United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNOMOZ	United Nations Office in Mozambique

UNPOL	United Nations Police
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
UNWPP	UN World Population Prospects
UPRGO	Patriotic Resistance Union of the Great West
URNG	Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WACs	Women's Artillery Commandos
WAI	Women Aid Incorporated
WANEP	West African Network for Empowerment Project
WAYS	War-affected Youths
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WVL	World Vision Liberia
YAFF	Youth Associated with Fighting Forces
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

1

Introduction: Combatants, Troublemakers, Peacebuilders or What?

The youth question in conflict-affected and post-conflict societies has become policy relevant for several international organizations and donor agencies working in a range of fragile environments. Technical advisors on youth based programming, social advocacy, gender focused programmes, and health, education, employment, training and livelihoods are part and parcel of the development challenge facing the international community across Asia, Africa, Latin America, South Asia and the Middle East. The focus on youth stems largely from the demographic reality of youthful populations voicing their demands through both violent and non-violent means. The events across the Arab world and in Ukraine recently present important issues that face young people in today's complex modern environments. To be a young person is not an easy thing anymore. Whether it is the United Kingdom, the United States of America, China, India, Turkey, Palestine, or in Nigeria, young people are facing challenges with respect to education, employment, housing, identity, political participation and social integration. But who are youth? Are they a homogeneous category with similar needs, or do they represent wide differences based on class, gender, ethnicity, religion and other forms of group specific affiliation?

Defining youth

For much of human social interaction, the category called 'youth' has been perceived as a historically constructed social category, a relational concept, and as a group of actors that is far from homogeneous. A myriad set of factors make childhood and youth highly heterogeneous categories in terms of gender, class, race, ethnicity, political position as well as age. They also have multi-faceted roles. Youth can be heroes as well as

victims, saviours and courageous in the midst of crisis, as well as criminals in the shantytowns and military entrepreneurs in the war zones. Yet, as a category, youth are approached as a fixed group or demographic cohort (Aguilar, 2007; Kurimoto and Simonse, 1998).

However by its very constitution, the term youth presents a relational concept drawing on the existence of difference types of groups and forces of sociality. In Durham's (2004) phrase, youth are 'social shifters' situated in a dynamic context. They inhabit a social landscape of power, knowledge, rights, and cultural notions of agency and personhood, where youth can become an emerging influence as well as be submerged by other types of power. In this sense, youth are people in the process of becoming rather than being. They stand on contested ground concerning what constitutes 'youth' in society: are they an age group, a social category, a political group or '*in-betweeners*' between children and adults?

In the current discourse, it is possible to locate three dominant types of approaches to defining youth. First is the 'age-defined perspective'. Drawing on western sociological discourses on youth-hood, that is the idea of single, gender-equal age of maturity, youth are defined as 'young people transitioning between puberty and parenthood' (Zarrett and Eccles, 2006). The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has defined 'youth' as the age between 15 and 24. However there is no single agreed definition. For example, the lowest age range for youth is 12 in Jordan and the upper range is 35 in a number of African countries including Sierra Leone, Liberia and Rwanda. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) use the term 'adolescent' for those aged 10–19, youth for those 15–24 and young people for those 10–24. There is also a degree of overlap between international definition of youth and children, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defining a child as everyone under the age of 18 unless the law of a particular country is applicable to the child, in which case adulthood is attained earlier (Hilker and Fraser, 2009: 9). The age-defined approach is largely inconsistent with an individualistic understanding of the development of youth across diverse social contexts. To address this nuance, the World Youth Report (2005) defines 'youth' as 'an important period of physical, mental and social maturation, where young people are actively forming identities and determining acceptable roles for themselves within their community and society as a whole' (World Youth Report, 2005: 150).

Secondly, youth are defined as a social construct. In this approach, youth are socially situated and culturally constructed in relation to other

socio-generational groups such as children, adults and the elderly. Here, 'youth' are characterized according to certain specific social attributes that differentiate them from other groups in society with respect to age, authority, social position, power, ability, rights, dependence/independence, knowledge and responsibilities (Durham, 2004: 593). Given its links with status and behaviour the socio-cultural definition of youth is largely contextually dependent and less defined by age (De Waal and Argenti, 2002).

Thirdly, youth are defined from a physiological perspective. They are regarded as representing a transitional stage in life between childhood and adulthood. Given that people from diverse contexts employ the term youth differently, as a concept there is an inherent fluidness and ambiguity that characterizes the term. Cultural markers such as rites of passage, marriage, childbirth, land ownership or ritual/spiritual initiation can be more powerful than physiological and cognitive characteristics. For example, in Africa the chief meaning of youth is dependence or being kept, it underlines reliance or dependence on others or an elder for food, shelter and clothing (Hansen, 2008: 102–103). The African Charter on Youth (2006) and the Youth Policy of the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) defines youth beyond the 24 year cut-off to address the late maturation and transition processes that most African youth face.

In sum, the concept of youth is transient and contested at best. It is poised carefully on the threshold between childhood and adulthood and defined by social, cultural and physical characteristics that evolve to define each phase. In essence, 'youth-hood' is a period of progressive maturation towards assuming responsibility for economic, personal, institutional, political and social processes and the management of interpersonal relations through careful navigation of social dynamics (UN World Youth Report, 2003). The definitions of youth are therefore relative to the construction of youth identity as a social rank that is linked to the evolving patterns of entitlement and social status (Ismail et al., 2009: 22).

Youth, peace and conflict

The UN World Population Prospects statistics (2012) estimates that there are 1.3 billion 15–24 year olds in the world and nearly one billion live in developing countries (UN, 2013). Nine out of ten youths within that age range live in developing countries where conflict is more likely to have taken place. The World Bank predicts that demographically people

below 25 years will grow to three billion in 2015 (www.iywg.org). This is a substantial human capital pool that must be engaged and developed in ways that can benefit different spheres of world development (IYWG, 2012). In the context of demographic realities, the potential of youth for change and positive action is the subject of a growing research agenda. The recent wave of social upheaval in the Arab Middle East provides a strong basis for refining contemporary strategies of youth-related development. It also urges fresh perspectives on the role of youth in conflict and peacebuilding.

The main schools of thought on youth, peace and conflict cut across disciplinary boundaries in politics, international relations, sociology, criminology, anthropology and in conflict and peace studies. In the discipline of international relations, academic interest in children and youth stems from three sub-disciplines. First is the role of youth as political actors through their participation in, or resistance to, democratic electoral politics, second is their role as conflict actors and finally, the role of youth in peacebuilding (Brocklehurst, 2006; Watson, 2006; 2007). In most countries youth are political actors, youth mobilization for violent political party-related violence during recent elections in Africa (Kenya, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia) and in parts of Asia (India) underlines the political nature of youth (Nugent, 2005; Kagwanja, 2006).

Youth as a conceptual category are 'othered' in the discourse on conflict. They are created as potentially dangerous 'subjects' and policy approaches often regard them as 'a problem'. A leading theorist on the role of youth in political violence, Jack A. Goldstone, argues that youth have played a prominent role in political violence from the English Revolution to the Revolutions of 1848, and that the existence of a youth bulge has historically been associated with times of political crisis (Goldstone, 1991: 2001). Male youth in the age group 16–30 have been observed as the main protagonists of criminal violence (Neapolitan, 1997; Neumayer, 2003) and political violence (Mesquida and Wiener, 1996; Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2000). In a recent Department for International Development (DFID) sponsored paper exploring the interconnectedness between youth, jobs and growth has also underlined the connections between youth exclusion, fragile states and conflict (Hilker and Fraser, 2009).

Drawing from this emphasis, much writing on youth and conflict tends to be overly negative. It focuses on the dangers posed by disaffected youth as is evident in the negative connotations of the 'youth bulge' or 'at risk youth' (Urdal, 2006). The presence of large youth cohorts is also seen as increasing a country's susceptibility to political violence and

crime. This position is well supported in both the 'greed' and 'grievance' approaches to civil war onset (Collier, 2000; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). The criminology literature offers developmental reasons why adolescent are often more susceptible to violent action due to differences in their biological, social and psychological developmental stages (Pitts, 2012). Recent literature on youth in post-conflict societies however marks a shift in thinking about youth. It underlines the agency perspective, and acknowledges the importance of making the connection between youth and peacebuilding for transforming a predominantly negative discourse on the role of youth in societies recovering from conflict (Boyden, 2003; Brett and Specht, 2004; Boyden, 2007; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Wessells, 2006; Özerdem and Podder, 2011; Sommers, 2012).

Post-modern conceptualizations of youth situate them as actors in the fields of power, knowledge and rights. Notions of agency and personhood privilege the actions of people exercised through the various and contradictory discourses through which they are constituted. It lauds the ability to author a positioned self or person at particular moments or encounters (Durham, 1998). From a post-modern perspective, youth are seen as a social shifter (Silverstein, 1976; Durham, 1998). They offer a window for understanding broader socio-political and economic transformations in developing societies. From a post-colonial perspective, youth offer an entry point for unravelling the ways in which processes of change involve people's agency. By examining the ways in which youth shape these processes and are not passive recipients or uninformed actors in fluid social contexts, critical approaches privilege the role of youth as important players in societies that are in flux. These societies are undergoing a revision of existing communitarian models, structures of authority, gerontocracy and gender relations and present evolving social relationships and patterns of interaction (Honwana and De Boeck, 2005: 1).

The positioning of youth in society has a bearing on their leadership potential and their possible role in peacebuilding. The tension between young and old has been one of the key features of inter-generational shift pertaining to the control over power, resources and people. The tension lies in the palpable youth impatience, their desire to strive for, and willingness to be seen as responsible and capable and the structural barriers to their social mobility. Independence from others and responsibility for others, such as taking care of a family or household, these can be seen as defining markers or pre-requisites of social adulthood. These continue to be difficult for youth in most developing country contexts in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In this sense, dependency, exclusion

and social or political marginalization become prominent sources of social contest. At the same time, types and forms of exclusion, marginalization and lack of integration vary across different cultural contexts.

Marginalized youth of post-colonial Africa have an unpromising political role. There is very little that youth have been able to learn especially in the form of technical knowledge and formal education. They remain marginal to a system where elders and traditional power holds have aggrandized power, knowledge and access to formal education and employment (O'Brien, 1996). Due to their imperceptible existence on the fringes of the political mainstream, marked by the futility of peaceful politics, the notion of rightful entry into serious politics expresses itself through youth violence (Hansen, 2005). Riot and looting, crime can be taken as important symbolic expressions of youth's contention (Bayart, 1992: 17; Argenti, 2001). Marginalized youth are also those mobilized as child soldiers, vandals and hooligans in the conflicts across much of post-colonial Africa.

In Asia, youth exclusion is different. It can be rooted in caste-based inequalities or a product of colonial patterns of power and resource distribution. In developed countries, economic uncertainties and exposure to new social technologies present new forms of exclusion and lack of integration in the nation concept. Religion, radicalization and processes of mobilization for political, economic and social violence presents other types of exclusion, marginalization and violence that can be observed in the inner city gangs and drugs-related violence in the Americas. These dimensions of exclusion, marginalization and their links to violence, has resulted in youth being typified as breakers and troublemakers. For example, the literature on African youth explores their ambiguous social roles as couched between dualities of identity and potential: 'vanguards or vandals' 'makers or breakers' (O'Brien, 1996; Abbink and van Kessel, 2005; Honwana and de Boeck, 2005; Rosen, 2005; Christiansen et al., 2006; Kagwanja, 2006; Bay and Donham, 2007).

Children and youth in Africa and elsewhere have remained 'silent others', voiceless *enfant terribles* (Caputo, 1995; Gottlieb, 2000), they are construed from the outside and from above as a problem or lost generation (O'Brien, 1996). Their involvement in conflicts, riots, rebellion and resistance has given them both power and potential, but one which is characterized as marginal, subjected. Exclusion, violence and oppression punctuate public perceptions of young people's lives in an evolving social space marked by contestation and hierarchy.

Recent scholarship in the field of peace studies emphasizes the positive roles that youth can potentially play in peacebuilding, development

and community recovery. They also challenge the stereotypical roles assigned to male youth as prone to violence and destruction. Such a narrative privilege feminist perspectives about gendered roles in conflict; and highlight the choices and decisions that guide young people's ability to navigate a complex social landscape (Podder, 2013; Denov, 2011; Borer et al., 2006). Post-colonial and critical schools of thought argue that although youth (both men and women) are agents of violence in a wide range of contexts, the motivation for their engagement in violence can be both universal as well as context specific (Argenti and Schramm, 2012).

Despite this scholarly attention to the different facets of young people's position and participation in conflict-affected societies, a number of problematic assumptions about the role, position, and contribution of youth appear to plague thinking among national and international elites driving recovery efforts within societies in transition. The majority of national and international policy pronouncements or security-related programmes in post-conflict and fragile contexts reflect a polarized discourse. They vacillate between the two extremes of 'infantilizing' and 'demonizing' youth. On the one hand, youth are viewed as vulnerable, powerless and in need of protection. On the other, they are feared as dangerous, violent, apathetic and as threats to security. Youth are subjected to stereotypical images of being angry, drugged and violent and as a threat (requiring interventions for their prevention). This applies especially to ex-combatant youth.

Assumptions about youth's innate ability for unleashing violence are closely aligned with broader thinking on new wars and new Barbarism literature (Kaldor, 1999; Kaplan, 2002) that have been used to explain recent conflicts in Africa as different from those previous. By advancing youth as objects of difficulty and fear, of abnormal tendencies and inclinations, policy makers have encouraged the 'youth as a risk' mind-frame in programmes targeting post-conflict recovery. At the other extreme, youth are gendered and infantilized (categorized as 'at risk'), through labels such as 'teenage mothers', 'sex slaves' and 'child soldiers'. These labels seek to represent varying degrees of vulnerability (requiring protection) and therefore advance interventions to secure young people from 'risks'.

Dijk et al. (2011: 1–3) argue that there has been a growing dispensation of donor funding, relief programmes and international aid that have made 'youth' the major beneficiary. Youth have become a new development target; NGO activities and their influence on local politics have influenced the manner in which the youth came to be recognized as a

category for intervention. These policies have reinforced the ideology of youth insecurity. The result has been greater exclusion rather than positive integration of young people into cohesive communities. In a recent review of constructions of youth in United Nations and World Bank youth policies, Pratley (2011) argues that Yvonne Kempner's research on youth organizations illustrates how the theoretical frameworks that lie behind youth programmes impact on their success in achieving effective youth development. Kempner argues in favour of the need to approach programming objectives from a holistic perspective, one that involves a rights-based approach, an economic approach and a socio-political approach to youth policy. Schwartz (2010) in her study on youth as agents of change in post-conflict reconstruction suggests that, protection efforts do not empower youth to take part in community development. Identity constructions influencing how youth are approached and framed can influence the direction of international programmes and intervention design.

The deluge of practical work with youth in fragile environments deserves further critical inquiry primarily because the literature on the potential of youth in peacebuilding remains relatively thin. Barring ad hoc observations about the potential of youth as peacebuilders or as a powerful peace constituency, very little analytical work exists on explaining the mechanisms through which this potential can be operationalized. Answers to the possible power and potential of youth in a particular context are missing. This lack of focused research on the role of youth in both conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction literature presents a significant theoretical gap and suggests a serious deficiency in our understanding of the processes whereby societies emerge from violent conflict. This, in turn, raises questions about our understanding of the sustainability of peacebuilding, particularly with regards to post-accord violence prevention and societal reconciliation and reconstruction. There is a need to look more carefully at the possibilities of harnessing the energies of youth for peacebuilding.

In this book, young people are viewed as a window to understanding broader socio-political and economic transformations in developing societies. It is hoped that such an approach can help unravell the ways in which processes of change involve youth agency. This task merits an exploration of the ways in which youth shape these processes and are not passive recipients or uninvolved actors in fluid social contexts. With youth as our primary lens for understanding the dynamics of social conflict and peace processes, we delve into the different ways in which young people are mobilized into collective violence in order to relate

these experiences to their potential role in peacebuilding. At the same time, our focus is primarily on 'Youth Associated with Fighting Forces' (YAFF). While the objective is not to isolate a particular caseload within the broader category of 'youth', it is our endeavour to grasp better the reintegration outcomes and reconciliation challenges faced by ex-YAFF in post-conflict and transitional contexts, given that this category of youth is often negatively stereotyped as 'at risk' youth, security threats, spoilers and troublemakers.

By focusing on the YAFF category, we take the 'reorientation' of youth discourses forward by linking in conflict mobilization processes and the role of youth with the untapped power of youth for positive social action. We emphasize the need for greater faith in their potential as agents of social change by encouraging a closer conversation between the literature on youth participation in conflict with the ever-expanding discourses on peace and the practice of peacebuilding. In this study, the aim is to re-frame conventional notions about ex-YAFF in more positive terms by reviewing their reintegration and reconciliation experiences. The focus on mobilization, reintegration and reconciliation processes involves issues of agency, choices, decision-making, subjective experiences and identity transformation that can have both negative and positive impacts both for conflict and peacebuilding.

Controversies regarding youth role are pertinent not only to debates on mobilization, they are also relevant during the reintegration and reconciliation phases. Given that most disarmament, demobilization, reintegration (DDR) programmes invoke a 'preferential treatment' focus on ex-combatant youth, this has consistently been a source of resentment and has vitiated community-combatant relations in post-conflict peacebuilding scenarios. The study addresses complex issues of how ex-YAFF instead of being perceived as materialistic troublemakers and criminals, security threats, mandating preferential treatment in reintegration programmes, could be viewed instead as potential leaders in society. For instance in Liberia, many ex-YAFF are now town or village chiefs and there has been substantial investment through the Peacebuilding Fund channels to support youth leadership development at the county levels. These examples inform the potential roles that ex-YAFF can play in societal reconciliation.

Ex-YAFF are perceived as needy and disadvantaged, losing their gun or source of income in times of peace, hence their demobilization creates a grievance-based justification in being compensated through payments and training packages. This in turn propagates an impression about DDR programmes as opportunities for securing material, educational and

reintegration benefits in the eyes of the civilian population who often become proxies to secure DDR support. The politics of conflict resolution and recovery in cases such as Liberia and Mindanao, Philippines present rich case literature and empirical basis for illustrating the themes of how mobilization, reintegration and reconciliation stages can become the site for revisiting contemporary assumptions and approaches to the youth question in fragile societies. Such a comparative empirical approach will assist in critically assessing the significance of addressing YAFF's role not only on conflict, but also their subjective experiences of return, reconciliation that can enable a better understanding of ex-YAFF's positive role in peacebuilding.

Organization of the book

Chapter 2 in this volume, which is entitled *Processes of Mobilization* discusses how a range of factors motivates youth engagement pathways in conflict. Reasons for participation can be a product of rational and conscious decision-making, they can represent a collective bid for social upheaval and social change, or demonstrate a commitment to deconstruct and dissolve established practices and institutions that are socially or politically exclusive of certain groups or classes as has been the case in West Africa, Nepal, Palestine, Philippines, India, Kosovo, Bosnia among other cases. The analysis investigates youth participation in conflict in terms of mobilization and recruitment as two distinctive pathways. The issues of voluntary and coercive recruitment and what they mean in different contexts are the main parameters of discussions in this chapter.

The third chapter, *Experiences of Reintegration* on the other hand, focuses on the second critical concept of this volume and that is what happens to ex-YAFF in post-conflict environments. It investigates the different opportunities and trajectories of reintegration that are provided to youth ex-combatants in order to identify the different challenges they face in the process of their transition to civilian identity. The discussions will elaborate different aspects of reintegration, namely economic, political and social. The discussion also draws from a wide range of related theories on peacebuilding and reintegration for contextualizing ex-YAFF experiences by providing empirical and comparative DDR experiences from around the world.

Chapter 4, *Reconciliation Challenges* provides a comprehensive understanding of truth, justice and reparation as the main building blocks of reconciliation. In connection with this, the chapter also investigates

the emergence of transitional justice as one of the most significant key components of contemporary peacebuilding environments. The chapter argues that youth face or create unique reconciliation challenges in post-conflict environments. Some of these challenges might be to do with how post-conflict programmes often fail to incorporate a 'youth appropriate' stance during transitional justice. In other cases, such challenges might be a consequence of the way that youth resist and subvert macro-level responses for reconciliation. Additionally, the chapter also elaborates upon the potential that youth have to be innovative in devising their own reconciliation strategies and tactics.

To examine the conceptual discussion further, two main case studies: Liberia and Mindanao in the Philippines are developed in the volume. The two case studies provide a number of opportunities for an effective exploration of this volume's primary concerns on youth recruitment, reintegration and reconciliation. They present interesting contrasts to the phenomena of youth participation in civil conflict and their role in peacebuilding because of starkly different motivations for youth participation, nature of rebel groups, community-combatant interactions and trajectories of peace processes and peacebuilding efforts. In the case of Liberia, given its post-conflict nature, it is also possible to draw more concrete lessons on reintegration and reconciliation outcomes while in the case of Mindanao, although there are some previous reintegration experiences, the island is just entering in its post-peace agreement process and therefore, it serves as an enabling process to explore what future reconciliation challenges there would be and how they could be linked with future DDR experiences.

To benefit from the two main case studies extensively, the book draws on primary data gathered through field visits to Mindanao (Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur and with focus on select Muslim tribes like the Maguindanao and the Maranao undertaken in two phases during September 2008 to June 2010) supported by a research grant from the British Academy and to Liberia in two phases of four and eight weeks (respectively, December 2008 and September–November, 2009 and work with select communities and INGOs in the counties of Lofa, Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, Montserrado, Bong, Gbarpolu and Nimba) which were supported by a number of small research grants.

Both chapters provide an extensive range of information on the conflict dynamics and how they provide a fertile ground for different types of youth participation in the conflict in terms of mobilization and recruitment. The analysis of the practicalities of the armed conflict in both case studies and what particular impacts this had on YAFF are the