

**THE INVISIBLE MAJORITY:
UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN AND YOUTH
AS SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ACTORS
IN FRAGILE POST-CONFLICT STATES**

by

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ABSTRACT

In fragile post-conflict states, the risks of conflict recurrence are high and international interventions are expensive and frequently unsuccessful. In this complex environment, children and youth are a poorly understood “invisible majority.” In order to better understand this group, this paper asks two questions: First, how do the current approaches to children and youth affected by armed conflict (CYAAC) and to state reconstruction affect how we understand children and youth in post-conflict reconstruction practice? Second, as local actors, how do children and youth affect the goals of post-conflict reconstruction? The paper argues that children and youth in fragile post-conflict states affect the durability of post-conflict state reconstruction, in part due to their demographic predominance. However, unless they are understood as actors with agency and power – rather than as humanitarian or security problems to be solved – they will not be engaged as “local actors” in state reconstruction practice.

Keywords: post-conflict reconstruction; state building; fragile states; children affected by armed conflict; children and war; youth and conflict; war-to-peace transition

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my parents, Ralph and Donna Bromley, who are far ahead of me in advocating on behalf of the world's children. Because of you, many of "today's orphans" will be "tomorrow's leaders."¹

"Every generation gets a chance to change the world
Divination that will listen to your boys and girls
Is the sweetest melody the one we haven't heard?
Is it true that perfect love drives out all fear?
The right to be ridiculous is something I hold dear
But change of heart comes slow..."² U2

¹ See www.hopeforthenations.com

² "I'll Go Crazy If I Don't Go Crazy Tonight" from "No Line On the Horizon 2009.

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ACRONYMS

C/Y	Children and Youth
CYAAC	Children and Youth Affected by Armed Conflict
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
IDA	International Development Assistance
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
IO	International Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSAG	Non-State Armed Group
PC	Post-Conflict
PCR	Post-Conflict Reconstruction
SOWC	State of the World's Children
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Chapter 1: Introduction

In fragile post-conflict states, the risks of conflict recurrence are high (Collier 2007; Muggah 2009) and international interventions are expensive and frequently unsuccessful (Ottaway 2002; Brownlee 2005). So why is it, in this high-stakes reconstruction environment, that the demographic majority³ - children and youth - are virtually invisible in academic state building and reconstruction literature (Borer 2006, 48; Schwartz 2008; Kemper 2005)? Do we understand how children and youth in these states affect the post-conflict reconstruction process?

Although they are actors with local knowledge of a complex post-conflict environment, the dominant portrayal of children and youth affected by armed conflict (CYAAC) is as 'passive victims' or 'active threats', both within the post-conflict and state reconstruction literature, and the literature of international organizations that focus on this group. While this representation may effectively 'securitize' children and youth and so advance the international agenda for children and youth (Jefferys 2005; UNDP 2006), problematizing young people as humanitarian or security concerns is not conducive to their inclusion in state reconstruction literature as 'local actors' who affect the durability of post-conflict reconstruction. However, recent research on childhood resiliency, the political and social effects of war on children and youth, and peace-building in fragile states is beginning to challenge these paradigms and point towards the multiple ways in which children and youth have agency and power, and so affect local state dynamics.

By weaving together research from multiple disciplines, this paper seeks to contribute to the post-conflict reconstruction literature and to our understanding of children and youth in fragile post-conflict states by addressing two key questions. First,

³ See Table 2.1

how do the current approaches both to children and youth affected by armed conflict (CYAAC) and to state reconstruction affect how we understand children and youth in the post-conflict reconstruction practice? Second, as local actors, how do children and youth affect the key goals of post-conflict reconstruction and what are the implications of this for reconstruction practice? In answering these questions it will become clear why young people should be a focus of study within post-conflict reconstruction literature, and why they have been poorly considered thus far.

Thesis and Methodology

The primary hypothesis of this paper is that children and youth in fragile post-conflict states are social, economic and political actors who affect the durability of post-conflict state reconstruction, in part due to their demographic predominance (Boyden 2006; Brocklehurst 2006; de Waal and Argenti 2002; McEvoy-Levy 2001). However, unless they are understood as actors with agency and power – rather than as humanitarian or security problems to be solved – they will not be understood as “local actors” or engaged as part of a “local solution” in the post-conflict reconstruction process.

This paper draws upon data obtained from a number of sources that include: books and academic journal articles; reports from international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGO), and international research and policy groups; the UNdata database; and international websites.

Sample Selection

Due to the general unreliability of data from post-conflict countries and the difficulty involved in gathering data from children (Wessells 1997), the arguments in this paper will

rely on a sample group of fragile post-conflict states rather than on a small number of case studies so that general trends may be observed.

To create this sample group, the UNDP “List of Post-Conflict Countries” was cross-referenced with the Small Arms Survey “Table of Selected Post-Conflict Countries: 1990-2008”⁴ to select a group of post-conflict states (UNDP 2008, 7; Muggah 2009, 226). Due to the constraints of this paper, as well as a desire to see the immediate effects of armed conflict on children and youth, the post-conflict data set was then delimited to include countries that ended major conflict episodes⁵ within the past decade (1999-2009). Four lists of fragile or weak states were then used to eliminate states that were not rated as highly or moderately fragile⁶ on at least two of the state fragility/failure indices⁷. Lastly, only states in which a concerted reconstruction and development effort is in effect were selected⁸. This was signified in one of two ways: either the state is a large International Development Assistance (IDA) recipient, usually in the “Exceptional Allocations” post-conflict category of the World Bank, or the state has had a post-conflict reconstruction and development assessment by the UNHCR and African Development Bank⁹. States that met all of these criteria were included in the sample group for this paper’s research (see Table 1.1).

⁴ “Non-Fragile Post-Conflict States” not included: Indonesia (Aceh), Kosovo, Lebanon, Macedonia, Papua New Guinea, Senegal (Casamance), Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka

⁵ Major conflict episodes are defined here as high intensity armed conflicts (war) in which there were at least 1000 battle-related deaths in a year. An armed conflict is defined as “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state” (Uppsala 2009 database).

⁶ “Non-Conflict Fragile States” not included: Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Iraq, Kenya, Myanmar (Burma), Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uganda, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

⁷ Indices consulted: CIPF Top 30 Most Fragile States - 2008, the 2008 Index of State Weakness in the Developing World (Brookings Institute), the World Bank “Harmonized List of Fragile Situations” (2009) and the University of Maryland’s “Peace and Conflict Instability Ledger 2010.

⁸ No further states were excluded as all are a focus of reconstruction efforts.

⁹ Found at: http://www.unhcr.org/Post_Conflict_Reconstruction/Post.html

Table 1.1 Sample Group of Fragile Post-Conflict States With Conflict Ending 1999-2010

States Selected	Most Recent Conflict Episodes	Post-conflict start date	Conflict Status
Afghanistan	1978-1991, 1991-2002, 2005		peace agreement, revived insurgency
Angola	1975-1994, 1997-2002	2002	peace agreement
Burundi	1991-2002	2003	peace agreement
Central African Republic (CAR)	1996-2006	2007	reduced conflict
Chad	1965-1988, 1990, 2006-2007	2007	revived insurgency
Congo, Republic of	1993-1997, 1998-1999	2000	peace agreement
Cote d'Ivoire	2002-2004	2003	peace agreement
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	1996-1997, 1998-2001	2002	ceasefire
Guinea-Bissau	1998-1999	1999	peace
Haiti	1991-1995	1994, 2004	reduced conflict
Liberia	1989-1990, 1992-1997, 1999-2003	2003	peace agreement
Nepal	1996-2006	2006	peace agreement
Rwanda	1990-1993, 1994, 1998-1999, 2001	2002	peace agreement
Sierra Leone	1991-1996, 1997-2001	1999	peace agreement
Sudan (North/South conflict)	1983-2002	2005	peace agreement
Timor-Leste	1975-1999	1999	peace agreement

To provide a context for the analysis and arguments of the paper, Chapter 2 will begin with a brief analysis of the existing literature on children and youth in fragile post-conflict states, the situation of children and youth in the fragile state context, and some key definitions. Chapter 3 presents the current theoretical and practical approaches to children and youth affected by armed conflict, state building, and post-conflict reconstruction in advance of analysis in Chapter 4, which analyses how the current approaches both to children and youth affected by armed conflict and to state reconstruction influence understanding children and youth in post-conflict reconstruction practice. Based on evidence from cross-disciplinary research in the social sciences,

Chapter 5 provides evidence of the significant ways in which children and youth in fragile post-conflict states affect the goals and the durability of post-conflict reconstruction, and considers what some of the implications may be for reconstruction practice. The paper will close by considering strategies for fragile post-conflict countries that would address the situation of children and youth while supporting and encouraging their constructive contributions to the post-conflict reconstruction process.

Chapter 2: The Fragile Post-Conflict Context

War, political violence and poverty commonly result in children and youth participating in economic, social and political activities more fully than ever before, and at a much younger age (de Waal 2002; Kemper 2005, 9). This factor, along with their demographic predominance, creates a situation in which children and youth are gradually playing more prominent roles in their fragile post-conflict societies (Hart 2005, 10-11; de Waal and Argenti 2002; Kemper 2005). However, the dominant discourses of the social sciences have been noted for their lack of attention to theory and research on the role of children and youth as social, economic or political actors (Borer et al. 2006; McEvoy-Levy 2001; Knutsson 1997, 3). Thus, the aim of this paper is to contribute to the state reconstruction literature through a study of the situation, our understandings, and the agency of children and youth in fragile post-conflict states in order to improve knowledge of how young people affect the goals and durability of state reconstruction. This study is cross-disciplinary, incorporating literature from conflict and security studies, development studies, anthropology, and childhood and youth studies.¹⁰

There are a number of straightforward explanations for the lack of research and theory on the role of children and youth in war-to-peace transitions (Borer et al. 2006; Schwartz 2008; Kemper 2005). First, the literature on fragile states has burgeoned only in the past decade, so it is still focused on very fundamental questions such as how to strengthen states that lack legitimacy and/or effectiveness (DIIS 2008). Hence, the subject of war-affected children and youth – and children generally - does not fit easily into this security and development economics paradigm (Knutsson 1997, 5; Boyden and

¹⁰ This will include literature from multiple disciplines from a broad range of sources including academic, international organizations and NGOs.

Levison 2000). Second, state building is about negotiating power relations, and children lack formal political power until they are able to vote (de Waal and Argenti 2002). Third, literature on children affected by war has traditionally been based on Western research models and experience (Knutsson 1997, 3; Boyden and de Berry, eds. 2004) It is just beginning to change as research from the developing country context emerges alongside studies on resiliency, alternate perceptions of childhood¹¹, and the impact of poverty and armed conflict on children. In the process, social scientists are beginning to recognize “the multiple ways in which children have agency and power,¹²” and paradigms are beginning to shift (Brocklehurst 2006, 19).¹³

This paper will draw on research from studies of the protection and care of children affected by armed conflict;¹⁴ the effects of war on children and youth;¹⁵ child soldiers;¹⁶ demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (reconciliation) (DDR/DDRR);¹⁷ and youth and conflict.¹⁸ It also consults a limited but important body of research on child participation in humanitarian and conflict zones,¹⁹ and research on children and youth as actors with agency and power.²⁰ Recent works by Kemper (2005), McEvoy-Levy (2001, 2006) and Schwartz (2008) are the first to focus on the role and the effect of youth in the

¹¹ New theories which emphasize the ‘embeddedness’ of children in their physical, social, cultural and political environment are beginning to emerge from the works of Bronfenbrenner, Liljestrom, Qvortrup, Cunningham, James and Prout, Jenks and others (Knutsson 1997, 56)

¹² By “agency” Brocklehurst means the ways in which children participate in and inform social practices; by “power” she means “their agency and their contribution” (2006, 19).

¹³ UN agencies, USAID, CIDA and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade are key international donor agencies leading this trend.

¹⁴ See Boothby et al. 2006; Chikuwa 2007; International SAVE 2007; Jefferys 2007; Otunnu 2007; Sabates-Wheeler and Pelham 2006; UNICEF 2009a; UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict: <http://www.un.org/children/conflict/english/index.html>

¹⁵ See Boyden et al. 2002; Boyden and de Berry 2004; Small Arms Survey 2009; Machel 2001; Wessells 1998.

¹⁶ See Boyden 2006; Coalition To Stop The Use of Child Soldiers 2008; McKay and Mazurana 2004; Singer 2005; Weiss 2005. For further reading see Brett and Sprecht. 2004. *Young Soldiers and Why They Choose To Fight*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

¹⁷ See Kemper 2005; Schwart 2008.

¹⁸ See Collier and Hoeffler 2004; UNDP 2006; USAID 2005; UNDESA 2003; Urdal 2006; Peter, Richards and Vlassenroot 2003; Sommers 2006.

¹⁹ Hart (2005) and Boyden and de Berry, Eds. (2004).

²⁰ See Boyden and Levison 2000; Boyden and de Berry 2004; de Waal and Argenti 2002; Knutsson 1997; Kemper 2005; Brocklehurst 2006; Levison 2000; Twum-Danso 2004; Hart 2005

post-conflict/accord reconstruction period. This paper will consider the role and the effect of both children and youth.

Children and Youth in Fragile Post-Conflict States

Why should children and youth in fragile post-conflict states be a focus of study within state reconstruction literature? The simple answer is that we cannot understand how children and youth affect the goals and outcomes of post-conflict reconstruction in fragile states unless we study the current situation of children and youth in that context. The following analysis will outline this situation with an emphasis on how state fragility exacerbates the impact of armed conflict in the lives of these young people.

Fragile Post-Conflict States

Fragile post-conflict states are a central focus of both development and security studies for important reasons. First, they have what Ghani and Lockhart call an “open moment” in which “the status quo can be ruptured and possible futures imagined” (Ghani and Lockhart 2008, 35). In this context, there is an opportunity for constructive institutional and political change to take place (Collier 2007; Rueschmeyer 2005, 160; OECD/DAC 2008). They are also a central focus because the effects of state fragility and conflict do not remain ‘contained’ within state borders, but ‘seep’ across national boundaries, impacting the security and development of neighbouring countries and the broader region (Rotberg 2003; Aning and McIntyre 2004). In addition, many argue that the dysfunctional state structures that typify fragile states are a barrier to development and contribute to conflict onset, or the inverse: that armed conflict creates a barrier to sustainable economic development and functional state structures (DIIS 2008, 8-9). Either way, state fragility and conflict are highly correlated with conflict recurrence

(Brown and Stewart 2009): post-conflict states are estimated to have a 20-25 percent chance of conflict recurrence within the first five years post-conflict (Muggah 2009), or a 40 percent chance of conflict onset within the post-conflict decade (Collier 2007). Concern over this situation has caused development and security studies to broaden their reach. This has resulted in a security-development policy nexus within which fragile post-conflict states fall (DIIS 2008, 9).

Definitions for state fragility and “post-conflict” vary according to their purpose. In this paper, Canada’s Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) definition will be used, with a caveat provided by the Crisis States Research Centre (CSRC). Accordingly, fragile states are considered to be:

“states that lack the *functional authority* to provide basic security within their borders, the *institutional capacity* to provide basic social needs for their populations, and/or the *political legitimacy* to effectively represent their citizens at home or abroad” (Carment et al. 2006)

And,

“A “fragile state” is a state significantly susceptible to crisis in one or more of its sub-systems. (It is a state that is particularly vulnerable to internal and external shocks and domestic and international conflicts).” (CSRC 2006)

A “post-conflict state” will be defined as (1) a state that has suffered from a severe and long-lasting armed conflict, or (2) a newly sovereign state that has emerged through the break-up of a former sovereign entity (World Bank 2009). In addition, it is a state that is transitioning along a continuum from active conflict to stability, while gradually achieving certain “peace-milestones” (UNDP 2008, xviii; Brown 2008, 4).²¹ The fragile post-conflict states within this study are at various points on this trajectory.

²¹ See UNDP 2008, xviii for a full list of these “peace-milestones”.

Children and Youth

The high proportion of children and youth in fragile post-conflict states is reflective of a global trend in which children and youth in “Less Developed Regions”²² now represent almost half of the population (SOWC 2009). However, in fragile post-conflict states, children and youth represent 59-68% of the total population (Table 2.1). This trend²³ is typical of post-conflict states, but correlates more highly with state fragility, as Table 2.1 shows²⁴ (Mc-Evoy-Levy 2006, 5-6). In these acute conditions of state fragility and conflict, the young majority face exceptional challenges to their survival and well-being, all of which have important long-term implications for their societies. Thus, it is imperative to understand the circumstances in which this group lives, as well as who is included in the terms “children” and “youth.”

²² “Less developed regions” comprise all regions of Africa, Asia (excluding Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean plus Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia (see UN Population Division for definition of regions at <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp?panel=5>). The sample set is included in this list.

²³ Reasons for this high rate include high fertility rates, as well as high adult mortality rates due to conflict, disease and high maternal mortality rates. In part, high fertility rates are a response to high infant and under-5 mortality rates, and poverty- families needing labour to survive.

²⁴ Due to the constraints of this paper, the post-conflict countries were limited to states with conflict ended between 1999-2010. More accurate results would require a larger study looking at demographics before and after major conflicts over a longer time frame.

Table 2.1 Demographic Indicators for Children and Youth in Fragile Post-Conflict States

STATES	% Aged 0-5	% Aged 0-14	% Aged 15-24	% Total Aged 0-24
All Post-Conflict States ²⁵		39	20	59
Non-Fragile Post-Conflict States ²⁶		31	19	50
All Fragile States ²⁷		41	20	61
Non-Conflict Fragile ²⁸		40	21	61
Less Developed Regions ²⁹	10	29	19	48
More Developed Regions ³⁰	6	17	14	31
Fragile Post-Conflict States Average	16	43	20	63
Afghanistan	19	47	20	67
Angola	18	45	20	65
Burundi	15	41	23	65
Central African Republic (CAR)	16	42	20	62
Chad	19	46	20	66
Congo, Republic of	19	41	21	62
Cote d'Ivoire	16	41	20	61
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	16	48	20	68
Guinea-Bissau	17	43	18	61
Haiti	10	38	22	60
Liberia	17	44	20	63
Nepal	13	39	20	59
Rwanda	17	43	24	67
Sierra Leone	17	43	20	63
Sudan (North/South conflict)	15	41	20	61
Timor-Leste	17	46	20	66

Data Sources: UNPD World Population Prospects 2008 (2005 data). All data is for countries that have ended conflict between 1999-2010.

²⁵ "All Post-Conflict states" are states that are in conflict or have ended conflict between 1999-2010. They include the sample set listed plus West Bank & Gaza; and "Non-Fragile Post-Conflict states": Indonesia (Aceh), Kosovo (UNICEF data), Lebanon, Macedonia, Papua New Guinea, Senegal (Casamance), Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka.

²⁶ See list of "Non-Fragile Post-Conflict" states in 22.

²⁷ "All Fragile States" include the sample set plus Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Togo, Yemen, Zimbabwe, Myanmar (Burma), Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, Tajikistan, Uganda, West Bank & Gaza. GDP data for Equatorial Guinea was excluded as it would strongly skew GDP results for "Fragile States".

²⁸ See 6.

²⁹ See 22.

³⁰ "More Developed Regions" comprise all regions of Europe plus Northern America, Australia/New Zealand and Japan (see UN Population Division for definition of regions: <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp?panel=5>).

Definitions for “Child” and “Youth”

Definitions for “children” and “youth” shape the programming response of international organizations and governments who work with children and youth affected by armed conflict. These organizations rely exclusively on the definition provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Article 1, which defines “the child” as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (UNGA 1989).

Although childhood scholars are quick to note that definitions of children and childhood are cultural and contextual, the CRC reflects a Western conception of children as passive recipients of care who have specific rights but lack specific obligations “by reason of [their] physical and mental immaturity” (UNGA CRC 1989; Brocklehurst 2006, 10; de Waal and Argenti 2002). By this definition, “childhood” is also understood to be a fixed developmental stage that ends at a politically defined point in time. This dominant “rights-based” conception of childhood is rooted in Western biomedical models of child development and juridical traditions and conceptions of citizenship (Brocklehurst 2006; de Waal and Argenti 2002, 14; Wessells 1998; Knutsson 1997).

For programming and research purposes, the UN and the World Health Organization (WHO) define “youth” as people aged 15-24 (UNDESA 2003; Sommers 2006a). Therefore, “youth” under age-18 fall under the legal jurisdiction of the CRC and all other international and national legislation regarding “children,” as well as the mandate of children’s agencies. However, “youth” is an ambiguous concept: as de Waal explains, “The concept of youth is a Western concept and a political construct...Youth is a problematic, intermediary and ambivalent category, chiefly defined by what it is not” (2002, 14; Kemper 2005, 8). “Youth” is also a gendered conception, almost always referring to males (UNDP 2006; 17; Brocklehurst 2006, 2).

For the purposes of this paper, “youth” will be included in arguments with “children.” One reason for this is that youth below the age of majority have the legal status of children. But more importantly, youth – like children – are not recognized as “adults” or as full members of society by governments or policy makers. As with children, their views, demands and contributions are marginalized and they are excluded from the political sphere (UNDP 2006; de Waal and Argenti 2002).

Exceptional Circumstances

Children and youth in fragile post-conflict states are the social group made most vulnerable by both the direct and indirect effects of war and state fragility. One of the most potent indirect effects of war is the public health crisis that it unleashes on children (HSRP 2010); meanwhile, two hallmarks of fragile states, poverty and a lack of service provision, compound this effect causing children in these states to exhibit some of the worst health indicators in the world: As Table 2.2 shows, life expectancy at birth (both males and females) in the sample set is 53 - in contrast to a developing county average of 68 - and infant and under-five mortality rates are far higher on average than in other less developed regions – 101 per 1000 live births versus 78, and 156 per 1000 versus 120 respectively. These are highly significant differences, and they are far worse than what is found in the general populations of either fragile or post-conflict states. They indicate poor survival prospects for children and youth, but broader national trends as well: The Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM) at the University of Maryland uses infant mortality rates as a proxy for overall economic development, levels of social welfare and the state’s capacity to deliver public services to the population. CIDCM also shows a robust relationship between high infant mortality rates and the likelihood of conflict onset (CIDCM 2010, 7). Clearly, children in fragile post-conflict states face an acute crisis of care that has far-reaching implications.

Table 2.2 Key Indicators for Children and Youth in Fragile Post-Conflict States

States ^e	Orphans ³¹ as % of children aged 0-18 ^{ah}	Infant mortality rate/ thousand ^{cg}	Under-5 mortality rate/ thousand ^{bh}	Prevalence under-5 stunting ^{dh}	Life Expectancy at Birth ^{eh}
Less developed regions ^d / Developing countries ^h	--	78	120	40	68
More developed regions ^g / Industrialized countries ^h	--	5	6	--	80
Post-Conflict ^f		76	116		
Non-Fragile Post-Conflict States ^f		36	52		
All Fragile States ^f		85	131		
Non-Conflict Fragile States ^f		83	136		
Fragile Post-Conflict States ^e	11	101	156	40	53
Afghanistan	14	165	257	54	44
Angola	13	116	158	45	47
Burundi	13	108	180	53	50
Central African Republic (CAR)	6	113	172	38	47
Chad	9	124	209	41	49
Congo, Republic of	11	79	125	26	54
Cote d'Ivoire	13	89	127	34	57
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	13	108	161	38	48
Guinea-Bissau	12	118	198	41	48
Haiti	9	57	76	24	61
Liberia	13	93	133	39	58
Nepal	8	43	55	43	67
Rwanda	17	109	181	45	50
Sierra Leone	12	155	262	40	47
Sudan (North/South conflict)	10	69	109	43	58
Timor-Leste	8	77	97	---	61

Data Sources: (a,b) UNICEF State of the World's Children 2009 (2007 data); (c) UNPD 2007 data (2008);

d UNICEF SOWC 2009 (2000-2007 data); e) UNPD 2008 (2005-2010 estimates); f For a list of states included in the group, see Table 2.1.

g Classifications used in UN Population Data Tables. See Table 2.1 for explanations.

Years of armed conflict also disrupt education services and family systems, and intensify poverty (Ager 2006; Boyden et al. 2002). Children and youth may lose years of schooling, and in some cases, a generation of knowledge transmission as well. During

³¹ "Orphans" include single (one parent died) and double orphans (both parents died) (SOWC 2009).

³² "Developing Countries" are listed in the UN SOWC (2009, 152) and can be found at <http://www.unicef.org/sowc09/docs/SOWC09-FullReport-EN.pdf>. The sample set are included in this group.

³³ "Industrialized Countries" are listed in the UN SOWC (2009, 152) and can be found at <http://www.unicef.org/sowc09/docs/SOWC09-FullReport-EN.pdf>

the war years and their aftermath, families fall deeper into poverty due to a loss of household assets³⁴, employment, and income earners (Boyden et al. 2002, 31). However, the similarity between GDP per capita in Fragile States and Fragile Post-Conflict states in Table 2.3 suggests that this poverty may be more strongly tied to state fragility than conflict and/or may be specific to war-torn regions.³⁵ At the national level, civil war reduces the annual growth of the economy by 2.2 percent per year (Collier 1999, 175–6). However, the true figure can be much higher: In Rwanda, the economy shrank by 11.2 percent per year during the 1990-1994 civil war (World Bank 2009b). High levels of war and post-conflict defence spending compound the effects of this negative growth, further reducing the national resources available for children and youth (Collier 1999).

A High Risk Environment

Armed conflict also affects children and youth in a very direct, personal way when they are targeted for violence in conflict zones in order to inflict fear upon the population (Jefferys 2005). These ‘grave violations,’ as they are termed by the UN, include killing and maiming, sexual violence and rape, targeting schools and health centres, and blocking humanitarian access for children. They are more common in fragile states where the rule of law is weak or non-existent, and impunity is the norm. (UNGA-SC 2009, 47-49; Jefferys 2005; Barnett and Jefferys 2008). These violations do not end with a peace agreement: As recently as 2009, half of the “post” conflict sample group showed evidence of continued widespread ‘grave violations’ against children (Afghanistan,

34 For an excellent discussion on reducing poverty, see “Understanding and Reducing Persistent Poverty in Africa: Introduction to a Special Issue” by Barrett, Christopher B., M. Carter and P.D. Little. 2006. *Journal of Development Studies*, 42 (2): 167–177.

35 A far more detailed study would be required to understand these connections fully. Note in Table 2.3 that the two oil-rich countries in the study, Sudan and Angola, skew the GDP results upwards.

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Nepal, South Sudan and the Darfur region, Cote d'Ivoire) (Ibid).

Table 2.3 Fragile Post-Conflict State Indicators

States	GDP per capita, ppp international \$ _a	ODA inflow, % of GNI _b	HDI Ranking /182 _c	IDPs/ Refugees (thousands) _d	Total fertility rate (child/woman) _j
All Post-Conflict States	2137				
Non-Fragile Post-Conflict States	3883				
All Fragile States	1374				
Non-Conflict Fragile States _e	1677				
Fragile Post-Conflict States _f	1304				5
Afghanistan	1054	37	181	250 IDP	6.6
Angola	2678	1	143	20 (IDP, 2005)	5.8
Burundi	729	52	174	100 (IDP, 2006)	4.6
Central African Republic (CAR)	1286	9	179	162/137	4.9
Chad	1551	6	175	168/325	6.2
Congo, Republic of	1341	7	136	8 IDP	4.4
Cote d'Ivoire	1702	2	163	40-340 IDP	4.7
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	751	27	176	2000 IDP	6.1
Guinea-Bissau	862	27	173		5.7
Haiti	1712	14	149	>2000 IDP (est.2010)	3.6
Liberia	362	57	169	23?	5.1
Nepal	1596	6	144	50-70	2.9
Rwanda	1278	25	167	undetermined	5.4
Sierra Leone	871	27	180		5.2
Sudan (North/South conflict)	2372	7	150	4900	4.2
Timor-Leste	717	24	162		6.5

a Source UN Statistical Division, 2006; b UNICEF SOWC 2009 (2006); c UNDP Human Development Indicators 2009

d Source UN OCHA and IDMC 2009; j UN Population Division 2008 (2005-2010 estimates)

e, f Only includes states that ended conflict between 1999-2010. For a list of what states are included in groupings, see Table 2.1.

In fragile post-conflict states such as Angola, where an estimated 250,000 child soldiers engaged in active combat during the country's twenty-seven years of war (Singer 2005, 43), young people face unique challenges. Ex-combatants face the challenges of DDR, re-socialization and managing the effects of trauma. Of these, many

“child” or female³⁶ ex-combatants lack access to DDR programming and are poorly understood by both their communities and international agencies (Kemper 2005; Sommers 2006a; Jefferys 2007). However, many young combatants remain active following the peace agreement, perpetuating an environment of instability, violence and fear for their peers. Their presence also increases the risk of forced child recruitment as well as the opportunities that exist for ‘voluntary’ recruitment (Kemper 2005).

Children and Youth in fragile post-conflict states also face a significantly higher risk than their counterparts in other post-conflict states of being of being trafficked³⁷ into, or exploited in, what the International Labour Organization (ILO) terms the “Worst Forms of Labour.”³⁸ Factors that make these young people more vulnerable include a weak rule of law; a lack of security; high rates of displacement, separation from or loss of parents or caregivers (see Table 2.3); deeper poverty and higher poverty rates; a higher likelihood of ethnic discrimination; and the presence of armed rebel groups or international peacekeepers in or near their community (Machel 2001, 57-58). Children in IDP camps or in urban IDP ghettos are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation (International Save the Children Alliance 2007; Wessells 1998, 637).

While children and youth are far more resilient in the face of trauma than was previously thought (McAdam-Crisp 2006), the circumstances just described reduce resilience. Further, family and community structures that would normally support resilience are often disrupted and reconstructed in new ways (Boyden et al. 2002; Ager 2006). Given these effects, it is critical to understand how to strengthen resilience in

³⁶ Female combatants are estimated to constitute 30-40 percent of active armed “child soldier” forces (McEvoy-Levy 2006, 14).

³⁷ This paper takes “child trafficking” to include instances in which children and youth are abducted or sold into the international human trafficking network, or where young people choose - or are forced by caregivers - to enter into sexually exploitative work in which they are controlled by local organized crime, may or may not be paid, and cannot easily escape.

³⁸ “Worst Forms of Labour” are “internationally defined as slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of forced labour, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, and illicit activities” (ILO 2006, 24 from ILO Convention on the WFL 1999).

children and youth in the post-war period and so support the state reconstruction process.

Chapter 3: Theory, Research and Practice

Three areas of theory and research are essential in order to appreciate how children and youth affected by armed conflict influence the key goals of state reconstruction. These include childhood theory - particularly as it pertains to the study of children affected by trauma; state building theory and practice; and post-conflict reconstruction approaches and practice. By studying these theories and their practice, it will be possible to evaluate how they influence our understanding of children and youth in post-conflict reconstruction practice.

Children and Youth Affected by Armed Conflict: Theory and Research

Given the devastation that war and state fragility bring about for children and youth, as well as the violent atrocities committed by child soldiers and youth insurgents, it is understandable that the literature portrays these young people as either “passive victims” or “active threats” (Sommers 2006a, 7; Kemper 2005; Wessells 1998, 636). This dichotomy represents two dominant perspectives: the first is a Western rights-based approach represented by the UN CRC which views children as individuals in isolation from their context (Knutsson 1997, 55), as developmentally immature, and during war, as the unfortunate and innocent victims of physical and psychological trauma (Wessells 1998; Knutsson 1997, 54; Boyden and de Berry 2004; Brocklehurst 2006). The second view is typical of security literature on child recruitment, child soldiers and the causes of civil war, which understands young people primarily as threats to stability and security, or as potential perpetrators of violence and disorder. Table 3.1 shows the dominant arguments present in this literature.

Table 3.1 Approaches to Children and Youth Affected by Armed Conflict (CYAAC)

ARGUMENT	UNDERSTANDING OF CYAAC	RATIONALE
Rights-based Argument (UN CRC)	Victims of the direct and indirect effects of armed conflict.	Children have the right to human security; this was enshrined in law through the ratification of the CRC by all but two countries, ³⁹ thus making it incumbent upon governments to ensure that children's rights are met.
"Feasibility" Argument	Youth (males) as a security threat	A high proportion of unemployed youth (males) in a fragile state increases the likelihood of conflict onset as the opportunity cost of insurgency is low. ⁴⁰ Also, "the proportion of young men in the society is a good proxy for the proportion of the population psychologically predisposed to violence and best suited for rebel recruitment" making conflict more feasible ⁴¹ .
Youth Bulge Argument	Youth (males) as a security threat	The sheer number of young men combined with institutional crowding increases the likelihood that young men will turn to violent methods to express their grievances ⁴² .
Security Argument	Child soldiers as victims (children) or threats (male youth)	Child Soldiers need to go through DDR into their communities for peace to be possible, and for re-recruitment to be less likely.
Spoiler Argument ²⁴	Youth as potential spoilers of the peace process	Whereas youth held relatively powerful political, social and economic positions during wartime, youth may have high expectations but inadequate opportunities in peacetime. Thus, youth may see higher utility in acting out their grievances (from peaceful demonstrations, to riots, to participation in street gangs, or rejoining rebel armies) than in integrating into the peace process ⁴³ .

These approaches and arguments certainly reveal a form of truth that reflects the reality of some children and youth affected by war. New theories, however, are providing "an alternative perception of children and childhood which emphasize the 'embeddedness' of the child in physical, social, cultural and political environments" (Knutsson 1997, 56). This literature understands children and youth to be "actively doing, constructing, representing, or overcoming extremes of environment and

³⁹ Only the United States and Somalia have not ratified the CRC. The United States did not sign for philosophical reasons related to its understanding of the nature of human rights which treats rights as the legally enforceable obligations of a state towards its citizens (Twum-Danso; de Waal and Argenti 2002: 209)

⁴⁰ See Collier and Hoeffler 2004

⁴¹ See Collier et al. 2006, 24.

⁴² See Urdal 2006, 609; Sommers 2006; Kaplan (1996, 16); Huntington (1996, 259-261).

⁴³ See Schwartz 2008, 23; Kemper 2005; McEvoy-Levy 2001.

experience” as opposed to “acting instinctively, reacting against, or responding to” (Boyden 2006, 23). Sommers recognizes this paradigm shift in his review of the literature on youth and conflict where he observes that “simplistic characterizations...are being confronted by research suggesting that war’s impact on youth is complex...youth are increasingly viewed less as damaged victims than as fairly adept actors in difficult war and post-war realities” (2006, 7).

The “passive victim” paradigm is being challenged in a number of ways. First, although the image of children as objects of concern is accurate for children aged 0-5, recent research shows that children have a significant degree of self-determination and autonomy even at a young age, and that they are capable of making moral judgments with minimal assistance (Brocklehurst 2006: 10-11; Boyden and Levison 2000). In terms of both moral and cognitive development, “children...reach levels comparable with adults between the ages of twelve and fourteen” (Brocklehurst 2006, 6; Melton 1987).

In addition, Western researchers are beginning to grasp that the transition from childhood to adulthood is less a function of developmental science, and more a function of socially constructed ideals that are represented by cultural, religious and legal markers (Brocklehurst 2006, 7; Wessells 1998, 640). Thus, age alone cannot be used to distinguish whether someone is a “victim” or a “threat/perpetrator.”

Similarly, new research on resiliency is showing that how “victims” experience and cope with trauma depends less on their age and more on the strength of “resiliency factors”⁴⁴ (Boyden and de Berry eds. 2004; McAdam-Crisp 2006). Whereas specific traumatic experiences were previously thought to effect certain psychological or physical outcomes directly, this line of cause and effect is now qualified (Ibid). As well, research

⁴⁴ Some of these include: genetic predisposition, intelligence, physical health, spirituality, social supports, whether they have healthy primary attachments, the developmental stage at which a child lost their primary attachment, and the number of traumas/crises that they experience (Boyden and de Berry 2004 Eds.).

suggests that healing and reintegrating survivors is most effective when programmes recognize the ways in which “victims” have shown resiliency and used their agency to negotiate survival, as opposed to treating the individual as a “victim” (UNICEF 2009a, 156).

The “active threat” paradigm is counterbalanced by recent studies from three primary sources: research on adolescent development, youth participation and peacebuilding. First, a large biomedical study has recently shown that high testosterone levels in male youth indicate a greater propensity to social dominance, rather than a “psychological predisposition to violence” (Collier et al. 2006, 24) or delinquency (Rowe et al. 2004; Sommers 2006a). In addition, Urdal finds that the effect of a high population of young males on stability depends a great deal upon the strength of governance and the presence of economic and social opportunities (Urdal 2006). Research on child and youth participation supports the importance of socio-economic opportunities by showing that the first choice of youth is to “seek out positive social roles and respect in their communities”. Their ability to do so, however, depends largely upon whether their basic needs are being met (Borer et al. 2006, 52; Weiss 2005; CIDA 2004a; Nordstrom 2006). Further, these studies show that engaging in violence is almost always a last resort for young people (Ibid, Borer et al.).

This body of research indicates that although children and youth may be victims of war and even active participants, the effects of these experiences are complex and are determined more by the strength of resiliency factors and the presence of socio-economic opportunities, than by age. The research is also clear that children and youth do not passively respond to their environment or the constraints imposed by adults (Boyden 2006, 23). In all situations, they show themselves to be persons with agency

and power who actively construct and negotiate their own reality within prevailing constraints (Brocklehurst 2006; CIDA 2004a).

State Building Theory and Practice

Whereas the literature on children and youth affected by armed conflict primarily focuses on the condition of *individuals* (Wessells 1998, 642-3; Boyden and de Berry 2004), state-building literature focuses on the *collective* context in which these children and youth live: the state and society, and relations between the two. “State building” is the international response specific to fragile states (DIIS 2008) whereby international actors focus on strengthening the apparatus of the state so that it is capable of responding to internal or external crises constructively and competently (CSCR 2006). In order to provide a basis for the arguments of Chapters 4 and 5, the following analysis focuses narrowly on the primary understandings of, and current approaches to, state building theory and practice.

State Building Theory

There are many tensions that underlie state building theory, primarily reflecting differing opinions of how to achieve the primary goal of state building, which is to strengthen the perceived legitimacy and effectiveness of the state (Call 2008, 1497). Scholars argue over the relative importance of the state versus society, how to rebuild institutions, and the role of international actors in the state building process (Gourevitch 2004). These opinions reflect different understandings of the state and the role of the state in society.

The dominant view of the state today is that state politics are more an issue of maintaining internal and external rule and control than of managing allocations (Krasner 1984, 224-225). In this view, the state is seen as a coherent actor in its own right, rather

than as a reflection of the preferences or characteristics of groups within society. This view also understands the institutions of the states as confining and determining individual and group behaviour, rather than understanding political outcomes to be the resolution of the intersection of multiple forces (Ibid).

This argument has lost some traction of late in the light of new statist arguments that emphasize the importance of seeing “the state in society” and state-society relations (Migdal 2001; Whaites 2008; Milliken and Krause 2002). Put simply, this view does not simply see the state as a unified entity with common motives and agendas, but also as a group of elites who are embedded in social relations of power and belonging within society (Migdal 2001). These elites actively pursue the loyalty of citizens through the maintenance of a “social contract,” but they maintain dominance through what Migdal describes as ‘cumulative struggles for domination’⁴⁵ (Whaites 2008, 5). Migdal argues that “Theories that do not incorporate the two sides of the paradoxical state end up either over-idealizing its ability to turn rhetoric into effective policy or dismissing it as a grab-bag of every-man-out-for-himself, corrupt officials” (Ibid, 22). Understanding the state in this way emphasizes the importance of state-society relations and the political economy of the local.

These conceptual tensions are evident in definitions of state building. Whaites focuses on national and local drivers of the state building process in defining state building as “the process through which states enhance their ability to function...[and] the product of state-society relations...which is primarily shaped by local dynamics” (2008, 4). However, the very broad scope of the OECD/DAC’s definition of state building dominates practice. This operational definition assumes international engagement and endows the international community with the responsibility to strengthen state-society

⁴⁵ Quote from personal discussion between Whaites and Migdal.

relations (OECD/DAC 2007, Principle 3). State scholars increasingly share Whaites' view that state-society relations and local dynamics are the key drivers of state building⁴⁶ (Bell 2009, 9; OECD/DAC 2007, 2008; Ghani and Lockhart 2008). The international donors who drive externally-led state building have been slow, however, to recognize this in practice (Bell 2009; Rocha Menocal 2009, 6).

Approaches to Post-Conflict Reconstruction

While some of the goals of state building fall under the aegis of post-conflict reconstruction (PRC), reconstruction is specific to the post-conflict environment and can also include peace-keeping, peace-building, nation-building and reconciliation. In comparison to state building which is more the domain of political scientists, the field of post-conflict reconstruction is significantly influenced by development economists and is usually overseen by either the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) or by the United States State Department (Rand 2005).

Doyle and Sambanis define the central practice of post-conflict reconstruction as

“foster[ing] economic and social cooperation with the purpose of building confidence among previously warring parties, developing the social, political and economic infrastructure to prevent future violence, and laying the foundations for a durable peace” (2006, 11).

In addition, the UNDP states, “The ultimate aim [of state reconstruction] is to establish the conditions for self-sustaining economic growth and human development while addressing the major risk factors for conflict recurrence” (UNDP 2008, xix). These definitions will guide our analysis later in the paper's arguments.

⁴⁶ “State building is about strengthening state-society relations and working with all three branches of government (executive, judiciary, legislative) and civil society. State building takes place at all levels of government – from local to national”. Kinshasa statement of 2nd July 2008 in preparation for the Accra High Level Forum, 2nd-4th September 2008 (Bell 2009, 9).

Post-conflict reconstruction is understood as a progression from war to peace that takes place in four approximate phases (GSDRC 2009): (1) The Emergency Humanitarian Relief phase; (2) the Early Recovery phase (or Post-conflict stabilization phase); (3) the Stabilization phase (or Transition and transformation phase); and finally, the Economic Recovery Phase (or Peace and development phase). However, in reality, phases overlap and crises propel the reconstruction effort back and forth between phases.

Against the wisdom of state scholars, and with few exceptions, international donors still tend to determine state building priorities through both their 'expertise' and their funding (ODI 2007). These wide-ranging priorities include ensuring security, establishing the rule of law and an effective political settlement⁴⁷, the effective delivery of basic goods and services, kick-starting economic recovery, and reducing horizontal and vertical inequalities (OECD DAC 2007; DFID 2007, 13). There is some debate over which tasks should be prioritized once the humanitarian phase is underway. Ottaway argues, however, that "The first challenge that recovering collapsed states must face is...not the creation of institutions, but the creation of some mechanisms...for generating power and authority" (2002: 1016). In the post-conflict setting, this is a delicate process that must lead to more effective institutions that are perceived to be both legitimate and accountable by the state's constituents (Papagianni 2008). Evidence shows that this is a monumental - and risky – task, and one that probably cannot be directed successfully by external actors (Ibid Bell; Milliken and Krause 2002; Whaites 2008; Ottaway 2002).

Some of the tensions implicit in this externally-led model of state reconstruction include: a state-centric approach that focuses on engagement with the state at the

⁴⁷ A *political settlement* is "the expression of a common understanding, usually forged among elites, about how political power is to be organised and how the relationship between state and society is to be articulated... Political settlements include not only formal institutions but also, crucially, the often informal and unarticulated political arrangements and understandings that underpin a political system." (ODI 2009b, 2)

national level rather than with local actors and state-society relations (Rocha Menocal 2009, 15); a technical and functionalist approach that disregards, or lacks understanding of, the local political economy (Ibid, 18; Call 2008); a short time horizon as donors fail to recognize that institutions change slowly due to local dynamics, and that state building is long term endeavour (Krasner 1984; DIIS 2008; Ghani and Lockhart 2008); a lack of stable, long-term funding from international donors in the amounts necessary to sustain the commitments of state building (Ibid DIIS, Ghani and Lockhart 2008); and the creation of parallel service delivery systems that undermine state legitimacy (Ibid Ghani and Lockhart). These tensions are due in part to a significant lack of understanding of local actors relative to external actors (ODI 2007, 21), as well as an inadequate “understanding of the dynamics of fragility and its variations” (OECD/DAC 2008, 7). Together they point towards an urgent need to understand local dynamics and to support local actors in fragile post-conflict environments.

Chapter 4: Understanding the “Invisible Majority” in Post-Conflict Reconstruction

How do we understand children and youth in post-conflict reconstruction practice? After reviewing the literature it is evident that there is a negative conception of young people – a view of what they are not, or a negative view of what they are. Given this imbalance, it is critical that we become aware of how we have arrived at our understanding. Karl Knutsson, the former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, asserts:

“The nature of the debate about children and development - or the absence of such a debate...determine[s] our awareness and our perceptions and thereby shape[s] our responses and proposals for action...In rushing to do what we believe is necessary and good we rarely give much thought to the nature of the fundamental assumptions and values which inform and guide our work...What we must fear is not doing so...[lest we] end up...being ‘brilliantly wrong’” (1997, 9-10).

This chapter will provide a starting point to consider how the “fundamental assumptions and values” which “inform and guide” our current approaches influence understandings of children and youth in post-conflict reconstruction practice. The impact of these approaches on young people and their states will also be presented.

The Effect of Current Approaches

Paradigms and approaches to practice are built on a set of shared understandings but when they become embedded in organizational culture they come to determine which events (or research) individuals and organizations notice and how they are interpreted (Autesserre 2009). In discourse analysis, these “collective, inter-subjective understandings that people draw on to construct roles and interpret objects” are referred

to as “frames” and they have a profound effect on the decisions and actions of large international organizations, in part because “people usually tend to interpret new information as a confirmation of existing belief” (Ibid, 250-51, 255). For example, if the dominant approach to war-affected children is to view them as victims, any new information about the negative impact of war will be interpreted as confirmation of the view that children in post-conflict states are simply victims.

So how do the current approaches to children and youth affected by armed conflict (CYAAC) and to state reconstruction influence understandings of children and youth in post-conflict reconstruction practice? Although the current approaches to these issues somewhat advance understandings of children and youth in fragile post-conflict states, overall these approaches inhibit our understanding of this demographic majority and prevent state reconstruction practitioners from understanding children and youth as social, economic and political actors who affect reconstruction practice. How these approaches have contributed to our understanding of children and youth in fragile post-conflict states will be discussed first.

Advancing Our Understanding

The greatest contribution of the CRC rights-based approach is that it has created greater awareness of the nature and urgency of the needs of children affected by armed conflict. By recognizing all children – both the “victims” and the “threats” - as social actors with the right to human security, the CRC has provided legal standards to guide the reconstruction practice of international donors (UNICEF 2009a, 101; Kemper 2005, 14). On the ground, this has translated into a strong international humanitarian response to children in the emergency phase of post-conflict reconstruction and into the prioritization of public services for children over the long term. In addition, in principle the right of

children to participate in decisions that affect them (CRC Article 12) has been given greater priority in program planning (UNICEF 2009a). Lastly, the rights-based approach has raised awareness of the need to protect children from the effects of armed conflict. In 2005, this led to the successful securitization of children's right to protection through the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1612 on the protection of children affected by armed conflict, as well as the establishment of a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) which reports to the UN Security Council on 'grave violations' against children (Watchlist 2009; Jefferys 2005; Chikuwa 2007).

To the extent that state reconstruction and development practitioners have focused on youth, their research and funding has been directed towards child soldiers and the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) of child and youth combatants. This has resulted in an improved understanding of how young people affect security in the war-to-peace transition. It has also raised awareness of the need to prioritize youth employment creation in reconstruction planning in order to discourage re-recruitment and to prevent youth from spoiling the peace process by engaging in disruptive, violent or illegal behaviour (UNDP 2008; Kemper 2005).

Table 4.1 The Effect of Current Approaches on Our Understanding of CYAAC

Current Approach	Paradigm	How the approach inhibits C/Y from being understood in PCR practice	Real and Potential Consequences of the Current Approach
"Passive Victims"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rights-based approach based on the CRC that views C/Y as passive victims of a violent environment in need of protection; ▪ Sees C/Y as 'innocent' victims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ C/Y not seen as capable or willing participants in society; not seen as utile; ▪ C/Y not understood as active survivors with experience and knowledge; ▪ Children problematized as objects in need of protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not included in decision making in matters that affect them⁴⁸; lack of inclusion undermines C/Y resiliency⁴⁹; ▪ Minimizes government interest in C/Y; ▪ Ignores their potential to cause suffering and destabilization⁵⁰. ▪ De-politicizes context by focusing on individual rather than on the causal environment⁵¹ ▪ Programming focuses on wrong priorities and on short term protection rather than on long-term resilience building⁵²
"Active Threats"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth (males) psychologically predisposed to violence; ▪ Large numbers of unemployed youth (males) are a security threat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fearful government, IOs, NGOs unlikely to engage with "threats", more likely to try to protect themselves; against the perceived threat. ▪ If spoilers to peace-process, why empower them? (Kemper 2005, 48) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Label masks real issues: marginalization, lack of economic and social opportunities (Sommers 2006a); ▪ Miss opportunity to engage C/Y in civil society, reconciliation and democratic processes⁵³ ▪ C/Y gravitate to organizations that give them respect, 'adult' opportunities (gangs, militia, illegal economy)⁵⁴
"State-Centric" PCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "The State" at the national level is the partner for donors to engage with;⁵⁵ Security solutions. ▪ Technical approach (Ibid) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Negates importance of society in the state, making engagement with local actors (C/Y) a low priority; ▪ Security focus feeds fear of youth ▪ Technical approach prevents youth participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Donors do not invest in empowering local actors (C/Y); ▪ Local actors (C/Y) marginalized creating risk of challenge to state.⁵⁶ ▪ Elite rule at the center strengthened by donors, entrenching inequality. ▪ Future state leaders are either C/Y of elites or members of NSAGs or militia.
Externally-Led PCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ International donors must direct PCR because fragile post-conflict states are unwilling or unable to do so, and their instability affects global peace⁵⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus is on technical solutions provided by international actors, rather than on social relations of power that are locally determined. C/Y are only recipients of technical solutions (public services), not part of a long-term solution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institutions, government lack legitimacy because services are provided by external sources, not state or indigenous social structures; ▪ Disenfranchised C/Y become adults disengaged from national politics; ▪ Nationals look for external solutions (donors) rather than internal solutions (C/Y, local actors) ▪ State mechanisms of power remain weak over long-term

⁴⁸ Kemper 2005, 47; The Lancet 2006

⁴⁹ Boyden and Levison 2000, 40.

⁵⁰ McEvoy-Levy 2006, 5

⁵¹ Boyden and de Berry 2006, xiii-xvi.

⁵² Schwartz 2008, 18; The Lancet 2006

⁵³ Boyden and Levison, 2000, 44; Kemper 2005, 38

⁵⁴ Kemper 2005, 10

⁵⁵ Rocha Menocal 2009, 15

⁵⁶ Whaites 2008, 5

⁵⁷ Gourevich 2004

How current approaches inhibit our understanding of children and youth

Although there are certain benefits to the way in which international donors currently approach children and youth affected by armed conflict and state reconstruction, these approaches inhibit us from understanding children and youth as local actors in post-conflict reconstruction practice. Table 4.1 illustrates these dynamics by building on academic theory and research to outline some of the potential and real consequences of these paradigms. Reflecting on this analysis, a number of important arguments can be made.

First, it can be argued that because state building and reconstruction focuses on national and international structures and actors in practice, rather than on local actors and state-society relations as theory advises, space for children and youth in the state reconstruction discourse and agenda is highly restricted. Current approaches to state reconstruction would give much more focus to understanding and empowering local actors if donors acted on the belief that state building is “the product of state-society relations...which is primarily shaped by local dynamics” (Whaites 2008, 4). However, Rocha Menocal argues, “although the discourse has evolved, in practice, donors continue to struggle with the challenges of coming to grips with the local political context” (2009, 17). Children and youth make up over 60 percent of the “local political context” in fragile post-conflict states, but because local actors are not the focus few consider the multitude of ways in which these young “local actors” impact “local dynamics” or “state-society relations.” Neither are they recognized in political terms as the constituency that will navigate the complexities of state fragility and conflict into the next decade. Instead, international donors strengthen elites who control the centre, which inadvertently perpetuates inequality and builds dependency on foreign resources.

Labelling these “local actors” as “victims” or “threats” is also not conducive to an understanding of the ways in which children and youth already contribute to state reconstruction or how they can be supported to contribute. The labels also oversimplify the tremendous variation in the experience, personality and social contexts of individual children and youth, while treating children as simply reacting to events rather than initiating responses to circumstances (Boyden 2006, 23). This approach has a direct impact on program design: labelling children and youth as “victims” or “threats” yields different policy approaches than if they are understood as resilient political, social and economic actors: No one is going to reasonably expect active engagement from a “passive victim,” nor – as Kemper points out - is one likely to empower an “active threat” (2005, 48).

The “victim” label in particular prevents us from understanding children and youth in critical ways that affect post-conflict reconstruction practice. First, McEvoy-Levy argues that this view “ignores the politically and socially relevant roles that they may play, not just in soldiering but in maintaining families and communities...It also ignores that children as active agents in war can cause tremendous suffering and destabilization” (2006, 4-5). In addition, this label focuses our attention on an incident (or incidences) of trauma in a way that dissociates the trauma – and the traumatized - from the causal environment (Boyden and de Berry 2006, xiii-xvi). Thus, programming interventions focus on a de-politicized event rather than on the context of inequality or injustice that caused it. This ‘disembeds’ the trauma and the child from their social and political environment and often overlooks indigenous sources of justice and reconciliation (Knutsson 1997). Casting children and youth affected by war as “victims” also generalizes the effect of traumatic war experiences across a spectrum of victims, overestimating the extent of the “problem” (Boyden and de Berry 2006). Boyden and

Levison also argue, “Representing children as passive victims rather than active survivors undermines the possibility of them acting on their situation and thereby further threatens their self-esteem and self-efficacy” (2000, 40). This approach weakens their resilience, or wastes an opportunity to build it. Finally, by viewing children as innocent, passive “victims” we understand them as “needy problems” to be assessed rather than as individuals who have developed survival skills and political awareness through difficult circumstances (McEvoy-Levy 2006, 297). If the focus was instead on young people as ‘survivors’ and ‘local actors’, international organizations would assess their skills and knowledge, and possibly regard them as one part of a “local” solution in the context of state reconstruction. Unfortunately, the current reliance on international and national structures and actors makes it less urgent to assess, understand or empower these abundant locally-held assets.

It is evident that the current approaches to children and youth and state reconstruction have very real and significant implications for young people and for their fragile states. The result of these approaches has been post-conflict interventions that favour Western, elite, gerontocratic and technical solutions that prevent children and youth from being understood and utilized as indigenous, knowledgeable and capable actors. As Knutsson predicted, our “fundamental assumptions and values” have “shaped our responses and proposals for action,” and in many ways we have been “brilliantly wrong” (1997, 9). Thus, a new approach is needed.

CHAPTER 5: Children and Youth in Post-Conflict Reconstruction

“Youth in Africa are marginalised by political and social structures, and neglected and overlooked by both scholarly and policy-oriented writings. This is not only an arrogant error, but also a potentially dangerous one...attempts to exclude youth from political and social life by ‘infantilising’ them...is a denial of the problems facing the youth and the wider society, as well as a refusal to acknowledge not only the capabilities of young people, but also their absolute numerical dominance in the overall population.”
(Twum-Danso 2004, 7)

Children and youth are the ‘invisible majority’ in state reconstruction literature, and in fragile post-conflict states. They are social, political and economic ‘actors’⁵⁸ – or “participants in a process” - who have both agency and power, but their contributions are marginalized, ignored or invisible to adults (Melton 1987; CIDA 2004a, 8). It is only when they are problematized or securitized that these young people make it onto the international agenda (ODI 2009a; UNDP 2006, 18). However, children and youth in fragile post-conflict states are social, economic and political actors who affect the durability of post-conflict state reconstruction, in part due to their demographic predominance (Boyden 2006; Brocklehurst 2006; de Waal and Argenti 2002; McEvoy-Levy 2001). However, unless they are understood as actors with agency and power – rather than as humanitarian or security problems to be solved – they will not be understood as “local actors” or engaged as part of a “local solution” in PCR practice. For this to be realized, we must first recognize the “fundamental ‘embeddedness’ of children and childhood in society and thereby in economy, government and culture...the child must be regarded as a subject, a member, a citizen, an actor and a co-builder of society” (Knutsson 1997, 43).

⁵⁸ An ‘actor’ is defined here as “a participant in an action or process.” (New Oxford American Dictionary)

Regardless of whether they are pro-actively engaged in the state reconstruction process, children and youth affect the goals and long-term durability of post-conflict reconstruction (McEvoy-Levy 2001, 2006). The question, then, is how? From her experience in Sierra Leone, Weiss argues that the existing approach to children and youth does not facilitate an understanding of this, or effective policy:

“In terms of policy development, these stereotypes [victim/threat] are reflected in a split-personality donor and government approach that tends to hype the threat of violent youth...and yet under-fund or ignore solutions that would positively empower young people to use their power for economic or social advancement. There is a general failure to recognise that the same power and ingenuity used to fight wars can and should be harnessed to prevent them.” (2005, 5)

A new view of children and youth as social, economic and political actors will provide a better understanding of this “power” and “ingenuity.”

Children and Youth as Social Actors

There is a certain irony to childhood and youth in fragile post-conflict states. On the one hand, conflict and extreme poverty create barriers to the achievement of traditional milestones that normally mark the transition from childhood to adulthood: socio-economic opportunities such as school completion and employment which make land acquisition, marriage and child-rearing possible (UNDP 2006; Ismail and Alao 2007; Twum-Danso). At the same time, armed conflict and poverty force children and youth to ‘grow up’ prematurely as a matter of survival (Schwartz 2008, 7-8; Kemper 2005, 9). This affords children and youth, as de Waal argues, a “de facto status of adulthood” in which children manage the care of younger siblings, their households, and are married⁵⁹ at much younger ages (2002, 15; Kemper 2005, 9; Schwartz 2008). Schwartz argues that

⁵⁹ Comment on child marriage rates

this situation creates a tension between “the real situation of children and youth performing adult functions, and the economic and socio-cultural restraints that prevent them from achieving recognition as adults in the greater political and social community” (2008, 8). Young people respond to this lack of status by creating alternate avenues through which to negotiate their lack of socio-economic opportunities and this child-to-adult transition. These ‘alternate avenues’ provide some of the best evidence to illustrate how young people affect post-conflict reconstruction practice as social actors.

The Evidence and Effect on Post-Conflict Reconstruction

Children and youth in fragile post-conflict states respond to the constraints in their lives by exercising agency in a number of ways. In the context of fragile post-conflict states, there are four significant trends that have a noticeable effect within the post-conflict reconstruction environment.

First, there is significant evidence that many child soldiers use recruitment as a means to navigate their circumstances, often joining armed forces ‘voluntarily’,⁶⁰ most often in response to previous trauma (McEvoy-Levy 2006, 14). For these young people, recruitment may offer material survival to those who lost caregivers or family (Borer et al. 2006; Wessells 1998); it may provide community or a means of protection or revenge for those who lost their community or were displaced (UNDP 2006, 19; Weiss 2005; Aning and McIntyre 2004, 76); still others see it as a better alternative to severe poverty or to an oppressive family situation, or they are sent to fight because their families are too impoverished to care for them (Singer 2005, 45; Wessells 1998). Twum-Danso argues that unless reconstruction strategies address the underlying “structural conditions that

⁶⁰ Some argue that this is not ‘voluntary’ because children lack other avenues for their needs to be met (Machel 2001, 11), or that recruitment is a response to previous trauma which must be addressed for peace to be durable (Sandford in McEvoy-Levy Ed. 2006). There also appears to be a link between the nature of a rebel group and whether children volunteer or are abducted (Aning and McIntyre 2004).

make it easy to militarise Africa's children and youth...no number of special programmes and laws will be able to prevent them from taking up arms" (Twum-Danso 2004, 23-24; Argenti 2002). This imports a particular urgency to PCR planning to "get it right."

Children and youth also seek out missing "child-to-adult" transition opportunities by migrating within and between countries of their own accord in search of socio-economic opportunities, or to escape violence (UNDP 2006). The latter was witnessed on an alarming scale when, according to Human Rights Watch, nearly 40,000 children in northern Uganda opted to become "night walkers," travelling many kilometres by foot each day to sleep in the nearby city of Gulu rather than risk abduction into the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) while asleep at night. In addition, many young IDPs or refugees migrate from IDP camps to cities of their own volition, to escape the lack of opportunities and community therein (UNDP 2006, 28). Such is the case in Angola, where war orphans have migrated to the capital city of Luanda and created a vibrant community within the city's storm drains (Nordstrom 2006). Sommers argues that policy makers would be wise to focus their attention on this broader phenomenon, not only because the demographic situation may pose risks to urban security and long-term stability, but also because "the wealth of youthful residents constitutes a largely untapped resource for ingenuity, stability and economic growth" (Sommers 2003).

A third way that children and youth actively respond to their situation is by pursuing religious faith. This is particularly evident in sub-Saharan Africa where both Islam and Pentecostal Christianity are witnessing rapid growth due to the involvement of young people. The UNDP and others see this as "a youth response to a deepening gap between their expectations and the opportunities open to them" due to the effects of deepening poverty and armed conflict (2006). This movement also appears to be making significant contributions to inter-group reconciliation and local community rebuilding (Ibid;

Ismail and Alao 2007; de Waal and Argenti 2002). Where this is occurring in communities on a large scale, it is effectively “foster[ing] economic and social cooperation with the purpose of building confidence among previously warring parties...laying the foundations for a durable peace” (Doyle and Sambanis 2006, 11), and “establish[ing] the conditions for...human development while addressing the major risk factors for conflict recurrence” (UNDP 2008, xix).

Lastly, children and youth who have witnessed violence in war show tremendous interest in both initiating and participating in peace- and community-building activities (Borer et al. 2006; Kemper 2005; CIDA 2004a; Hart 2005; Blattman 2009). They appear exceptionally aware of the nature of the problems that their communities face, and they have concrete solutions in mind (Ibid, Hart; CIDA 2004a). Recent research supports these findings by showing a strong correlation between abduction and community leadership among ex-combatants from the LRA (Blattman 2009, 223): community leadership is twice as likely among ex-combatants, and community participation increases with exposure to violence⁶¹. However, studies from Sierra Leone and Liberia suggest that the local context and quality of governance may affect whether this community leadership is constructive or destructive (Ibid, 245).

These four trends illustrate just a few of the ways in which children and youth in fragile post-conflict states actively respond to the constraints that they face due to state fragility and war. It is evident that whenever possible, the majority of children and youth would rather contribute to their communities than engage in destructive behaviour (Borer et al. 2006, PP). However, where socio-economic needs of young people are not being met, they are far less resilient to trauma and are more vulnerable to become “risk factors for conflict recurrence” (UNDP 2008, xix; UNDP 2006; Schwartz 2008).

⁶¹ This finding may support psychology research, which shows that trauma often results in significant personal growth (Blattman 2009, 244).

Children and Youth as Economic Actors

“One thirteen-year-old with a Kalashnikov rifle found directing traffic at a Kabul intersection stated: “I came to Kabul when my brothers [in the Northern Alliance] removed the Taliban. Before I was in a camp, but now I’m a policeman and proud” (Borer et al. 2006, 52).

This anecdote encapsulates many of the complexities and contradictions that surround the economic contributions of children in fragile post-conflict states. On the one hand, children and youth in fragile post-conflict states often take pride in the significant economic contributions that they make to household survival, both as unpaid and paid labourers. On the other hand, the deeper the poverty and more numerous the crises, the more likely children and youth are to engage in the “Worst Forms of Labour” in order to survive (ILO 2006, 24). In the sample states in this paper, 31 percent of children ages 5-14 “work,”⁶² although Table 5.1 shows that the proportions range from 4 to 53 percent. This is twice the average of Developing Countries. In addition, on average 61 percent of males and 53 percent of females aged 15-19 engage in work⁶³. Thus, children and youth make a significant contribution to both household and national economies.

There are two issues here with regard to the economic effect of children and youth on post-conflict reconstruction. The first has to do with the need for economists to begin to consider children and youth as ‘utility-maximizing individuals’ who make economic contributions and have preferences (Knutsson 1997, 56; Boyden and Levison 2000, 46; Levison 2000, 127). This is not simply a moral imperative: economic assumptions that form the basis of policy may not be accurate if we simply assume that

⁶² ILO definition of Child labour: Percentage of children 5–14 years old involved in child labour at the moment of the survey. A child is considered to be involved in child labour under the following conditions: (a) children 5–11 years old who, during the week preceding the survey, did at least one hour of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work, or (b) children 12–14 years old who, during the week preceding the survey, did at least 14 hours of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work (SOWC 2009).

⁶³ These figures exclude engagement in the “Worst Forms of Labour.”

the preferences of children and youth mirror those of adults. Nor will we understand the impact of these policies on young people if we do not understand their preferences. This may be a passable practice where young people are not the majority of the population, but where they are, it is likely that assuming adult preferences introduces a large margin of error to the data. Donors want reasonably accurate cost-benefit analyses for various interventions and many of these have to do with children and youth. If policy analysts or development economists simply rely on security arguments that prioritize DDR or youth employment, or assume that households understand the opportunity cost of their children's labour best, when in fact households are simply making decisions based on daily survival rather than long-term household well-being, reconstruction strategies and policies may be skewed. Recent evidence supports this concern: A major study by the ILO found that the benefits of eliminating child labour in developing countries and replacing it with universal education actually outweighs the costs⁶⁴ by a ratio of 6.7 to 1 (2004, 4).

Second, for long-term security and economic growth to be durable, children and youth in fragile post-conflict states need to be counted as 'public goods' that provide positive or negative externalities to the state depending on their condition (Boyden and Levison 2000, 47). This is not a simple task; evaluating children and youth as 'public goods' "require[s]...that the many environments of the child be mapped and analysed in order to understand more clearly the relevant patterns of dependency and interdependency" (Knutsson 1997, 42-43). But this may be the only effective way to assess the economic contributions and needs of a young population who make up the majority constituency.

⁶⁴ The costing in this study assumes that families are paid a subsidy to offset the immediate economic loss of their children's labour.

Table 5.1 Children and Youth As Economic and Political Actors

States_b	% Age 5-14 working_{ah}	Economic activity rate ages 15-19, male, est._a	Economic activity rate ages 15-19, female, est._a	Government and/or NSAG currently active with children?_c
Developing Countries_h	16			
Fragile Post-Conflict States_b	31	61	53	
Afghanistan	30	64	35	YES
Angola	24	83	69	
Burundi	19	81	84	YES
Central African Republic (CAR)	47	67	61	YES
Chad	53	45	53	YES
Congo, Republic of	25	58	67	
Cote d'Ivoire	35	60	32	
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	32	73	56	YES
Guinea-Bissau	39	79	63	
Haiti	21	52	40	
Liberia	--	48	47	
Nepal	31	46	47	YES
Rwanda	35	59	60	
Sierra Leone	48	79	58	
Sudan (North/South conflict)	13	27	16	YES
Timor-Leste	4	61	54	

Sources: a) ILO (1980-2020 estimates).

b) Only includes post-conflict states that ended conflict between 1999-2010.

c) Source: UN Report of Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict

h) Source: SOWC 2009: For a list of states included in "Developing Countries" see SOWC 2009, 152. The sample set is included in this group.

Children and Youth As Political Actors

“Where would war makers be without youth?”⁶⁵

The notion of children as political actors does not fit well with the Western conception of childhood as a period of innocence and separation from the adult world (Brocklehurst 2006). Nevertheless, both developmental science and history present abundant evidence of this reality. One of the foremost authorities on child and youth psychology and policy, Dr. Gary Melton, explains that although political socialization occurs throughout one’s life, the “greatest change in political interests, activity and identification” occur by middle school, when “children answer in terms of policy and politics when asked what changes they would like to make in the world” (1987, 363). History confirms this finding with countless stories of children and youth who have constituted a significant proportion of the front lines of major social and political movements for change throughout time (de Waal 2002; McEvoy-Levy ed. 2006).

The Evidence and Effect on Post-Conflict Reconstruction

Young people mobilize and are mobilized for political causes: they initiated the Soweto riots that led to the end of apartheid in South Africa and the voting age was lowered to 14 in recognition of their contribution (McEvoy-Levy 2001; UNDP 2006); they were mobilized in large numbers for genocidal purposes by both Hitler (Hitler Youth) and the Hutu Power extremists in Rwanda⁶⁶ (Prunier 1995); they constituted more than 75% of the fighting forces (estimated at about 100,000) in the most recent West African wars

⁶⁵ Argenti 2002, 145.

⁶⁶ Hutu Power extremists in the government of Habyarimana created, armed and radicalized Hutu youth groups years before the genocide. These youth groups became known as Interhamwe and committed a significant proportion of all the genocidal killings in 1994 (Prunier 1995).

(Aning and McIntyre 2004; Ismail and Alao 2007, 14); and youth initiated the call for a European Union following World War II and lobbied hard for its creation (Galtung 2006). During his research in the Occupied Territories, Hart found that Palestinian children were not only willing participants in the nationalist struggle from a very young age, but they also had a strong awareness of how their identity as children influenced public opinion through the media (2005, 12). These examples illustrate that young people have significant political power, that they understand their agency, and that they are deeply aware of the power relationships that constrain their choices and opportunities, as well as those that affect their environments (Melton 1987; Brocklehurst 2006).

Children and youth in post-conflict states are more politically aware and active than their counterparts in other developing countries (McEvoy-Levy ed. 2006). While the reasons for this are not fully understood, four explanations stand out. The first is that children absorb the ethno-political opinions of their caregivers at a very young age. In one study of children living in Northern Ireland, 3 year-olds were able to identify and attribute positive or negative character traits to Catholic and Protestant individuals (McEvoy-Levy 2001, 20). Thus, where adult opinions are strong, as in the case post-conflict states, children are more likely have strong, well-formed opinions about the "other". Second, the experience of being an 'active protagonist' in a political struggle enhances self-esteem and helps young people to manage adversity and build resiliency (McEvoy-Levy 2001, 28-29; McEvoy-Levy ed. 2006; Boyden and Levison 2000). Thus, in a post-conflict survival environment young people are more likely to use political involvement to strengthen their resiliency. Third, Blattman's study of ex-combatants in northern Uganda shows a strong positive link between the experience of violence and political activism: ex-combatants were 27% more likely to vote, and twice as likely to be leaders in political organizations (2009, 223). This does not diminish the deleterious

effects of war, but it shows that children and youth who have witnessed violence in war are more likely to be politically active as a consequence. Lastly, children and youth in fragile post-conflict states are coming of age in an environment that lacks stable government, basic material and physical security, and economic or educational opportunities. In such a context, youth often give up on traditional power structures and “seek to mobilize their own generation in search of solutions” (USAID 2005, 2). In the context of post-conflict reconstruction practice, this once again points to the need to have a thorough understanding of vulnerability and resilience factors in young people, and to focus interventions accordingly, rather than simply targeting interventions according to age (Boyden and de Berry eds. 2004).

Patterns of Political Action in Fragile Post-Conflict States

Although every state has different conflict drivers, the political involvement of youth in fragile post-conflict states follows a fairly predictable pattern. Initially, youth mobilize or are widely targeted for mobilization by liberation movements, electioneers, elites or insurgents to agitate for change (Ismail and Alao 2007). This may be in response to diminishing socio-economic opportunities, bad governance or marginalization, or may be on behalf of elites who are in a contest for control (Ibid, 17; Aning and McIntyre 2004, 83). When war breaks out, some children and youth are recruited to fight, while others are displaced or work within their communities to help care for their families and neighbours. In a few cases, youth work to promote peace or more educated/elite youths use their power to continue to advocate for change during the war (McEvoy-Levy 2001, 5). Following the cease-fire, youth may be invited to participate in setting the terms of the

peace agreement or accord, but if this happens it is rare and more symbolic than real⁶⁷ (Ibid, 2; McIntyre and Thusi 2003). In the cases of Mozambique and South Africa, older leaders purposefully excluded politically active youth during peace negotiations in order to conceal the extent to which their groups had engaged child combatants (McEvoy-Levy 2001, 9-10). In contrast, youth groups in Sierra Leone were given the unprecedented opportunity to participate in peace negotiations and their contributions definitely helped to consolidate the peace (McIntyre and Thusi 2003), but this example remains the exception.

Regardless of their previous political involvement, neither the aspirations nor the concerns of young people are addressed in either the peace agreement or the state reconstruction process, and children and youth are again politically marginalized (UNDP 2006, 26; Ismail and Alao 2007, 18; McEvoy-Levy 2006, 2; Aning and McIntyre 2004). In the post-conflict context, politically marginalizing youth in this way is widely understood to be a precarious move that often propels politically involved youth into engagement with criminal gangs or towards other violent behaviour, or compels them to become 'spoilers' of the peace process (UNDP 2006, 26; Ismail and Alao 2007). This exclusionary approach also has great potential to destabilize both state and regional security over the long term as marginalized ex-combatants move across porous national borders to pursue the economic opportunities of warfare in nearby states (Aning and McIntyre 2004, 83). This pattern has been evident throughout the African states in the sample, as well as in the recent conflict in Afghanistan.

These patterns have a number of implications for the post-conflict reconstruction process. First, the durability of the peace agreement depends over the long-term on its

⁶⁷ It is currently UN policy to include youth in the peace process and as it unfolds, but this is rare in practice (McEvoy-Levy 2006, 3).

acceptance by young people today, in part due to their demographic predominance. This is not to say that their dominance presages instability, but rather, that they are one important factor within a larger political and institutional context (Schwartz 2008). A more significant indicator is whether young people understand themselves to be the local marginalized or “invisible majority,” and whether they have opportunities to achieve the traditional milestones that mark their “child-to-adult” transition. Where they are marginalized and lack opportunities, destructive behaviour or resistance is likely (Sommers 2003; McEvoy-Levy 2001, 5; UNDP 2006). Where the opposite is true, young people are likely to contribute to their households and communities, and to building the peace (Ibid; Borer et al. 2006).

As well, traumatic war experiences can be transformed into constructive action, but whether this happens appears to depend on the broader context and the individual (Blattman 2009, 245). Schwartz also shows that youth’s propensity to destabilize or contribute to peace and reconciliation following conflict depends a great deal on how interventions are sequenced and how well they are performed, rather than who performs them (2008, 36). Sommers (2006) and McEvoy-Levy (2001) point out that the durability of the peace agreement depends on how the next generation is socialized during the war-to-peace transition, and on their perceptions of what has been achieved. At the individual level, the resilience of a child or youth can greatly affect whether they become destructive, just manage to cope, or contribute to community life.

These findings suggest that post-conflict reconstruction practice must focus on fewer but quality interventions that are well-sequenced and well-implemented; interventions that support or build resilience; and program planning that involves young people in identifying their needs and priorities, program design and implementation. In

this case, “the medium is the message”⁶⁸: By partnering with children and youth, young people learn democratic principles and the value of civil society. They also understand that someone is listening to them and that their needs and opinions are valued. As de Waal points out, “Democracy is learned by those who practice it” (2002, 220).

Implications for Post-Conflict Reconstruction Practice

Shifting our assumptions about children and youth towards a greater understanding of the agency of children and youth in fragile post-conflict states has the potential to influence policy practice and reconstruction outcomes in a very positive way. However, the current reality is that state, security and development scholars and practitioners lag far behind politicians, religious groups, non-state armed groups and drug lords in recognizing children and youth as actors with agency and power. These groups successfully mobilize children and youth because they recognize their capabilities, their need for socio-economic opportunities, and their strong awareness of the need for change. Post-conflict reconstruction practitioners still have much to learn.

For state reconstruction efforts to be more effective over the long term, children and youth affected by armed conflict must be viewed and valued as local actors who are the majority constituency, and state reconstruction practice must prioritize local actors and local dynamics in research, practice and funding. If this shift is made, it will spur complementary research which, combined with field learning, will help to refine our understanding of the situation of children and youth in fragile post-conflict states, how they affect the durability of post conflict reconstruction, and how they can be engaged to strengthen the war to peace transition.

⁶⁸ A phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan meaning that the form of a medium embeds itself in the message, influencing how the message is perceived.

In practice, peace negotiations would benefit from the meaningful participation of children and youth, particularly those who were active in conflict (McEvoy-Levy 2006; Galtung 2006; Aning and McIntyre 2004). Galtung argues that engaging youth in peace negotiations would improve the effectiveness of the peace settlement in a number of ways. First, in contrast to the more static ideas of the mature adult males who traditionally direct this process, young people tend towards idealism, an openness to new ideas and creative thinking (2006, 262). This enables them to see more possibilities and to see change as feasible, which should translate into a more inclusive and effective agreement (Galtung 2006, 265). Second, young people hold critical knowledge about the real effects of war and poverty and the local dynamics of the post accord period, both of which would strongly benefit peace negotiators (McEvoy-Levy 2006, 297). Lastly, because socio-economic opportunities are slow to develop, politically empowering young people can send a strong message that change is coming. In Rwanda, where youth were significant participants in the genocide and where the state struggles to provide the most basic social and economic opportunities to its children and youth who represent 67 percent of the population, parliament has decentralized decision making in order to empower youth politically: youth representatives have been elected to community-level positions since 1998 and to the National Assembly since 2001 (Sommers 2006b), and in 2003 a National Youth Council was established by an act of parliament and the Rwandan Constitution.⁶⁹ In Rwanda's unstable context, these political initiatives have inspired a sense of hope for the future by sending a vital message to young people that their needs and opinions matter.

As reconstruction practitioners and international donors shift their paradigms and approaches and begin to prioritize children and youth as local actors who affect the

⁶⁹ See http://www.miniyoung.gov.rw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=82&Itemid=144&lang=en

durability of state reconstruction, the urgency of the need to provide economic and social opportunities to young people will become more apparent. As it does, practitioners must focus on supporting the creation of educational opportunities that provide relevant skills quickly (Kemper 2005). In order to contribute to stability, these opportunities must be inclusive of older youth as well as those young people who would normally be marginalized, such as ethnic minorities, street children, children affected by HIV/AIDS and young people from lower classes or castes. Practitioners must also focus on building capacity in youth who show leadership qualities and open doors for these youth wherever possible so that national leadership is not only developed but also empowered. To translate education into economic opportunities, micro-credit and small grant programs for youth must also be developed and quickly scaled up. Both the UNDP and World Bank are beginning to view this economic investment as a crucial piece in building stability (Kemper 2005, 35).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

“Youth are on the frontlines of these conflicts; they are the soldiers, the victims, and all too often the suicide bombers. It’s about time they were put on the frontlines in the battle for peace.”⁷⁰

As both the demographic majority and the next generation of leaders, children and youth act as a compass within post-conflict reconstruction, pointing out the direction that the process is headed. Where children and youth face greater constraints than opportunities, are invisible or marginalized, and have had their resilience diminished by persistent trauma, they point to an unstable future in which conflict is more likely. Warning indicators include a decline in child and youth health, increases in re-recruitment, high youth migration, and a rise in violence and illicit activities. Aning and McIntyre suggest that these youth-based indicators are so clear that they could act as “conflict early warning” signals to trigger conflict prevention analysis (2004, 82). In contrast, where the state and international donors are succeeding in creating a secure state and improving the rule of law, and social and economic opportunities for young people are improving, analysts witness a decline in child participation in the ‘Worst Forms of Labour’, improvements in health indicators, increased school enrolment, a decrease in youth violence, gang activity and recruitment, and an increase in child and youth participation in community initiatives and leadership. Where this is the case, as it appears to be in Rwanda (OECD 2006), there is a good chance that peace will take hold. Children and youth themselves lack the political power to direct these initiatives, but they use the power that they do have to negotiate the constraints and opportunities found within their fragile post-conflict environment very effectively.

⁷⁰ Goldberg and Khanna, 2003. “Second Generation Diplomacy” in the *Washington Times*, 12 December.

This paper contributes to the literature on children and youth affected by armed conflict and state building and reconstruction by showing that the situation of young people in fragile post-conflict states is exceptional and warrants special focus within the field of state building and reconstruction. It reveals that the way in which academics and practitioners currently approach children and youth affected by armed conflict, and the way in which practitioners approach state reconstruction, affects how children and youth are understood in the post-conflict reconstruction process: children and youth are treated as either victims or threats rather than as local actors who are resilient survivors. These dominant approaches then guide and shape international donor interventions in these states. Unless both paradigms and policies shift, both academics and practitioners will be blind to the multitude of ways in which children and youth already participate in state reconstruction as social, economic and political actors and - implicitly or explicitly - help to shape its outcomes.

A number of strategies could improve the effectiveness of post-conflict reconstruction, while encouraging and empowering children and youth to contribute to the peace-building process:

1. International donors assist fragile post-conflict national governments to create national action plans for children and youth (NPA)⁷¹, and encourage this with funding and expertise;
2. International donors make aid to certain sectors conditional on a multi-sectoral strategy on children and youth (Weiss 2005);
3. States with high proportions of youth are encouraged to lower the voting age to 14 or 16, as South Africa has done (de Waal 2002; UNDP 2006)
4. Through UN-NGO regional networks, international organizations and NGOs are encouraged to increase the participation of children and youth in programme

⁷¹ This initiative exists within UNICEF but has been weakly implemented, least of all in fragile post-conflict states.

planning and implementation, focus on interventions that build resilience (Boyden and Levison 2000), and increase peace-building programming for youth (Kemper 2005);

5. Fund research that focuses on the situation and effect of children and youth in fragile post-conflict states in order to better inform state building and post-conflict reconstruction strategy.

In a complex context full of man-made tragedy, this analysis delivers good news: Over 60 percent of the populations in fragile post-conflict states are children and youth who show tremendous resilience in the face of trauma. In addition, they have local knowledge, including an understanding of the problems that they and their societies are facing (McEvoy-Levy Ed. 2006); they have experience and tools to aid survival (Ibid 2001); they have well-formed ideas about what would improve their situation personally, locally and nationally (Hart 2005; CIDA 2004a); and research continues to support the assertion that the first choice of young people is to “seek out positive social roles and respect in their communities” (Borer et al. 2006, 52; Weiss 2005; CIDA 2004a). At a time when the success of international interventions is increasingly under scrutiny (Gourevitch 2004; Ottaway 2002), these locally available “resources” should be of special interest to international actors who engage with children and youth affected by armed conflict, or state reconstruction in fragile post-conflict states.

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