

## **Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict**

### *Youth in Conflict: Peacebuilding and Protection*

Meeting Notes, January 27, 2005

The fourth meeting of the Washington Network on Children in Armed Conflict convened on Thursday, January 27, 2005. The meeting built off of USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation's Toolkit on Youth in Conflict. The dialogue focused on peace building and protection efforts directed at youth affected by and involved in violence.

The conversation centered on the range of issues faced by young people in situations of war and how they respond social crises and vulnerabilities. Questions included: What drives youth to participate in violence? What factors help most young people avoid being drawn into violence? What roles do youth play in conflict situations? How can young people play positive, constructive roles in wartime? What are the most effective programmatic approaches to working with youth in conflict?

The meeting began with brief presentations from *Zach Rothschild* from the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation USAID, *Jane Lowicki* from International Rescue Committee, and *Solène Edouard-Binkley* from Christian Children's Fund.

### **Discussion Points:**

*What factors facilitate youth involvement in armed conflict?*

The group touched on some of the key factors that drive young people into conflict, however, it was clear that there are many, complex and interlinking causes of youth involvement in organized violence. Some of the points discussed included:

- Poor governance, little economic opportunities, fractionalization, and areas with large youth populations.
- Vulnerabilities; young people are disproportionately affected by conflict, lose their educational and vocational opportunities and are forced to take on traditionally adult roles.
- There is a wide range of youth experiences in situations of armed conflict. The vast majority of young people do not get involved in violence at all; what roles do they play?

*Why should we be interested in youth in armed conflict?*

It was clear from the dialogue that the various organizations in the room had quite different overall strategic goals and objectives and were working with young people for different ends. Some views included:

- Young people are key to promoting peace and security
- Protection of young people's rights
- Young people have a major impact on the situation in conflict areas. Ukraine is an example of where youth organizations played a major role in peaceful demonstrations against government.

- Youth face some of the most dire needs in humanitarian crises and situations of conflict.

*What are some effective programmatic approaches in working with youth in armed conflicts?*

- Youth programs should provide young people with alternatives to armed conflict.
- Young people can serve as key resources to providing protection to entire communities including elderly.
- Providing youth with the necessary conditions as to give them the opportunity to develop their full potential. Many young people are already leaders, they just need to be recognized and given space for participation at a societal level.
- To improve young people's conditions, we must remember to address root causes of conflict as well as youth's needs and rights.
- Address broader environment of youth by creating economic, educational, and civic participation opportunities.
- Address issues of young women and girls specifically, particularly their vulnerability to gender-based violence.
- Although participatory programs are essential, having a top-down programs working with local governments and institutions can be a good compliment in truly making a difference in young people's lives. The impacts of participation have not been measured with great depth.

*Additional Key Questions:*

- ⇒ Do participatory-based youth programs truly address the larger conflict in the area?
- ⇒ What is the relationship between rights-based and needs-based programming?
- ⇒ How do we align strategic objectives aimed at promoting stability and peace with protection-oriented objectives?

## **Resources and Program Sharing**

### Upcoming Events

- **Great Lakes Policy Forum.** Topic: "*Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda: Dynamics, Obstacles, and Opportunities,*" Thursday February 3<sup>rd</sup> from 9:00 to 11:00am. For more information please contact Graham Couturier at Search for Common Ground: 202-777-2218, [glpf@sfcg.org](mailto:glpf@sfcg.org) Kenney Auditorium, Nitze Building School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 1740 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC
- On Thursday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, from 12 – 1:30 PM, Creative Associates International, Inc. is sponsoring a brown bag session led by Rebecca Winthrop, Education Program Manager of the International Rescue Committee. Ms. Winthrop will be presenting the *INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and*

**Early Reconstruction** developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. These standards were launched in Cape Town, South Africa at the Second Global Inter-Agency on Education and Early Recovery held in December 2004. These standards can be downloaded from the [www.ineesite.org](http://www.ineesite.org) web site.

Creative Associates International, Inc. is located at 5301 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 700, just off the Red Line's Friendship Heights stop. Please contact Margaret McLaughlin at 202-966-5804 X116 or [MargaretM@caii.com](mailto:MargaretM@caii.com) if you need further information or directions.

- **Washington Network for Children and Armed Conflict Special Event:** Come join *Peter Singer* in a discussion of his recent book *Children At War*. February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Location and time to be announced.

### **Resources:**

**Youth in Conflict: Toolkit for Intervention.** Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, US Agency for International Development. Washington, DC.  
[http://www.dec.org/pdf\\_docs/PNADB336.pdf](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNADB336.pdf)

**Adolescent Programming in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situation: Case Studies.** United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Can be found online at:  
[http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/index\\_23555.html](http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/index_23555.html).

For print copies: [opsen@unicef.org](mailto:opsen@unicef.org)

### **Women's Commission Reports on Adolescents in Conflict:**

- *Untapped Potential: Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict.*  
<http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/adol2.pdf>
- *Youth Speak Out: New Voices on the Protection and Participation of Young People Affected by Armed Conflict:*  
[http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/cap\\_ysofinal\\_rev.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/cap_ysofinal_rev.pdf)
- *Making the Choice for a Better Life: Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Kosovo's Youth*  
[http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/you\\_adol.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/you_adol.pdf)
- *Against All Odds* (Report by Youth in N.Uganda)  
<http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/ug.pdf>
- *Precious Resources: Participatory Research Study with Adolescents and Youth in Sierra Leone*  
<http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/sl/index.html>

**Equip 3 Resources Online:** [http://www.equip123.net/equip3/index\\_new.html](http://www.equip123.net/equip3/index_new.html) .

**The Security Demographic: Population and Civil Conflict after the Cold War.** You can download it from:

<http://64.224.182.238/resources/publications/securitydemographic/download.html>

**Voices of Youth (UNICEF)** is a website dedicated to linking young people with one another. <http://www.unicef.org/voy/voy.html>

**Children at War**, by Peter Singer, was recently published by Random House and available in most bookstores.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/pantheon/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=0375423494>

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