



**THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 2007, 10AM - 12PM**  
**The “Threat” of Masculinity:**  
**Youth, Development Gaps, and the Case of Rwanda**  
*Meeting notes*

THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 2007,  
*The “Threat” of Masculinity: Youth, Development Gaps, and the Case of Rwanda*

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**Background to the Research**

- The preliminary report research on youth in Rwanda for the World Bank, is based on interviews with youth to find out what they think and to propose practical next steps based on what their responses.
- Two components to the research were important:
  - In Rwanda youth are the representative majority especially the less educated youth. Counter part research consisted of asking the same qualitative questions, which resulted in different answers.
  - Other piece “Too Poor for Peace.” Thesis is that of democracy, youth and gender from the perspective of masculinity, which affect the rest of society.
- Going to help women implies boys are bad, which consequentially creates more problems for both sex.
  - Mention to Zanthi doing the research

**Policy implications rising from the Youth Bulge Thesis**

- Gaps in development practice (post-war reconciliation, and humanitarian assistance)
- Research findings are in process of being written

### **Some Background Statistics on the Youth Bulge Thesis**

- We live in the age of youth in numbers and proportion to the overall population, which has never seen before in history
- Half of world population is under the age of 25
- 1.5 billion people in the world population
- The majority of the world's youth live in the developing world
- 75% of Rwanda's total population is under the age of 30 in Rwanda. They are also some of the poorest people in the world.

### **What is the Appropriate Response?**

- If we looked at government policies we would never know that the majority of their population are youth.
- This is true also in regards to development policies
- The reality is often that in post conflict situations, youth are seen as *bad boys* and *bad girls*; most development / humanitarian etc. professionals are trained in rural youth. Yet the majority of the youth are trying to migrate to the cities, which for them is synonymous with *reinvention*.
- Manhood rituals are starting to peter out of Sub-Saharan Africa and going to the city is replacing these rituals. (examples of Burundi and Bujumbura, where it was difficult to spot young men in the rural areas of the country, yet in Bujumbura it was difficult to see other population groups other than young men, in this burgeoning city.)
  - When people come into these cities people see young men that's where according to them they are supposed to be, women are there in less numbers, far less visible.
  - This provides a sense of what's happening in the developing world. They are reflecting interest in being connected to the city.
  - Not just occurring in Sub-Saharan Africa. The rule of thumb seems to be that cities triple in size after war. (Example of Kosovo, most censuses are profoundly low)

### **What is the Youth Bulge?**

- The Youth Bulge signifies the youth cohort relative to the general population. This is extremely pertinent in the Middle- East (including North Africa) and in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- The Youth Bulge argument is mainly used to dramatize youth bulge & security risk, primarily made by the U.S. security community. The argument contends that if a country has a large amount of youth in proportion to its total population, that country is extremely likely to have political violence. Such an argument implies that the correlation is causative, a serious flaw because correlation are not causative.
- This youth bulge is based on the idea of people, that people are afraid of young men; the assumption that when there are too many young Arab or African men, something is bound to explode.
- Yet, while there is no proof of causation, the correlation between violence and youth bulges is pretty well established. Henrich Urdal's argument is robust. He

found a connection between where it happens and weak economies. He contends that instability is more likely in places where there is no democracy.

### **Context of the Youth Bulge and what should be done:**

- After a review of influential research based on the youth bulge mainly from the U.S. security sector, the risk is not just set in the context of potential political violence but also of terrorism. In example USAID and the Department of Defense are working on youth programs targeted at what they estimate are potential terrorists.
- This also sets the context for the issue of the threat of masculinity.
- A few pieces contributing to the idea that young men present a threat to society is Robert Kaplan's "The Coming Anarchy" and "The Ends of the Earth" In which he describes West Africa in an extremely Afro-pessimist way, predicting that the rest of the world will follow in the footsteps of some of West Africa's capital cities. Another piece is that of "The Security Demographics" by Chinkanda. Both of these authors support the idea that masculinity is violent.
- So what are the policy recommendations that emerge from this?
  - While Kaplan paints a dark future with no solution, Chinkanda argues for women education and promotes their access to contraceptive methods, arguing for a reduction of birth rates.
  - No reference is made to working directly with young men.
- This raises two questions:
  1. If young men are inherently violent, then how come most young men and women resist to violence and terrorism? (example in Sierra Leone)
  2. What is this issue of Resistance?
    - Child Soldiers even if estimated at 300,000 in the world today (which in reality is probably even lower) in terms of proportion to the amount of youth in the world is not a large percentage. While this is a pressing issue, there is a tendency to inflate the numbers.
    - Furthermore, there is no youth voice from these assumptions. We really don't know how they view their situation.

### **So how do youth view their situation?**

Painting a picture of youth in conflict and post conflict

- We are driving youth with policies that are not catering to them. The reality is that youth don't live in the sectors donors do.
- Impact of conflict on youth:
  - The military take advantage of youth, they know their potential and exploit it.
  - On the other hand, governments and agencies don't look at the potential of youth rather they fear them.
  - We are still stuck on advocacy. Youth & conflict needs to move beyond advocacy and the academic world.
- Youth are pitched into roles traditionally not supposed to perform, as spouses, entrepreneurs, and so their identity is connected up to that. Unlike rural youth,

- women say the boys have more pressure and girls are incredibly dependent on boys when becomes urban
- Youth migrate in numbers in cities. The irony is that the majority of the people in the city act as outcasts, yet they are the majority but they are not represented.
  - Educated youth have huge problems, i.e. Nairobi gangs organized by university graduates furious, as they are jobless.
  - Youth have gone beyond their cultural molds, they are not going back to subservient roles
  - Our knowledge base is insufficient, few quality evaluations, as those almost don't exist. In order to assess the effectiveness of programs, there is a need to talk to youth who aren't in the program. Yet, the tendency is to mark the territory without really knowing it.
  - Community reintegration refers to rural, popular post war concept, which implies a past way of living, doing.
  - Community integration would be a better way to name and approach the topic, which then implies that youth have there own community as well. But as it stands it is never going to happen.
  - Civil society: the way we operationalize this is problematic. The views are not mainstreamed; female youth are not represented in women groups and young men in youth groups.
  - Recognized youth leaders are often quite detached from the rest of the youth. Issue is not that educated youth don't have needs but to assume that they represent the whole youth population is a nonstarter. They constitute a different group of people.
  - Gender is slanted in terms of females although this beginning to change, it is important because so often female youth are invisible. Yet, it is problematic to only focus on the female youth because this leads to thinking about gender in a way that rarely includes the impact of emasculation; how they can be teased and ridiculed by both men and women.

**Gender:**

- We need to better understand masculinity: this will lead to a better chance of helping young women.
- According to most of the world religions manhood must be created, while womanhood is biological.
- In Swahili, adolescence only refers to girls, much like the ripening of a fruit. On the other hand, men have to go straight from childhood to manhood, and this is done through a set of rituals.
- Masculinity “The Other Half of Gender” presents the two dimensional framework, that upholds the the stereotype that female are the victims and men are the problem.
- In this article the difference between masculinity and Hegemonic Masculinity is made, in which:
  - Masculinity refers to all men dominating everyone, whereas,

- Hegemonic masculinity refers to powerful men who rule everyone: all women and then the rest of the men. Many women support this idea of keeping the young men down “wait your turn”.
- The threat of failure and social humiliation is due to the masculine model that most men can’t reach, being a no-body, destructive, violent, with elective behavior. This points out that male violence is more social than biological
- Accordingly some argue that violence is lower in societies where men can express fear freely.

### **The Case of Rwanda:**

- It is difficult to get balanced information about Rwanda today. On the one hand donor publications emphasize the positive, while on the other Human Rights groups emphasize the negative, as if they are speaking of two different countries
- The survey asked questions in both Rwanda and Burundi, from rural youth.
  1. Do you have a plan for improving your situation?
    - Of the responses, 11 had no plan; 44 had a plan but lacked the means to implement it and 44 had a plan and didn’t need help to implement it.
    - Of these 11 people with no plans they were *diggers* (farmers), with no other source of income, poor and destitute;
    - Of the 44 with a plan but who lacked means to achieve it, ¼ of the group had an additional income strategy other than digging and all but 15% were poor.
    - Of the 44 with a plan and who needed no help to achieve it, ½ had a diverse income strategy and 1/3 were non poor.
  2. Who might help you achieve that plan so you might find success?
    - Of the 75 responses ¼ could not think of either anyone or no one but god to help them achieve their plan
    - 2/3 said the government could help them achieve this plan
  3. Are there organizations supporting you?
    - ¾ said no organizations
    - All those who said there were organizations listed negative barriers to attaining their help.

Generally, the plans consisted of agriculture related ones; 1/5 were business ones and 1/5 were related to education.

- No one talks about migration as a plan although it happens.
- Most respondents do not have a plan, few list positive experiences from help received and cite the government as the one who could potentially help the most.
- The dominant rural youth preoccupation is achieving manhood, i.e. building a house. Female youth have to work too, since for every 100 women there are 88 men, but this is almost true in all post conflict societies.

- These findings are the direct opposite of what was found in Burundi, where virtually all of them said education or training was a plan and almost all had a plan.
- Migration to cities and large farming are the greatest preoccupations: men see that they need house to get married and have children, in order to be a man.
- Yet, three policies prohibit this from happening:
  1. Restricting where youth can build houses
  2. Cut on roofing material (deforestation)
  3. Secondary school enrollment

### **A Look Ahead:**

- For Rwanda, rural youth need support for roofing not education. First they have to become men, which comes back to the pressure from masculinity.
- While the issue of male youth violence in Rwanda is an option, it probably won't happen because after the genocide people have more mobility, they can move around, which creates an outlet, which wasn't there in a pre-genocide Rwanda.
- The threat of male emasculation is real, but we should not be afraid of young men, rather of the threat; that is that war undermines masculinity, that masculinity is much more fragile and easy to destabilize than common assumptions.

### **Recommendations:**

- Where masculinity is under threat, there is a need to assist the men first in order to better help the women.
- There is a need to stabilize masculinities
- If a successful program for women alone runs, without assistance for men there is a greater threat for violence.
- The Youth Bulge argument is not something to throw away, but an indication that we should be in more places where there are youth in terms of cities and countries
- Inform how we work, and target group people who are marginalized.
- Because of the demographics, there is a need to prioritize policy over programs. Giving teeth to national youth policies is extremely important in the long run.
- Ask the question of which youth when talking about youth.
- Stop making it worse with counter-productive aid policies. Rather we must create a learning environment between implementers and donors to move ahead.

### **Discussion:**

Q: You talked about the societies of less violence and acknowledging fear, would you recommend exploring programs where manhood is explored where safe spaces is created to discuss these manhood rituals and tweak them to make them more attainable?

A: Interesting idea. What is our role in talking about this issue? The starting point is to discuss with government officials, and by getting really good information, because some

leaders really angry and frustrated with the youth. This is an intimate issue, and we have to be careful with how we talk about it.

Q: A few months ago, the WNCAC hosted the authors of the SWAY research, and one of the side discussions was based on the definition of youth itself; is there any particular definition of youth in the cultures (i.e. Rwanda) you were doing research and did that influence the answers / research?

A: Age range is controversial; there is no universal agreement, even amongst the UN agencies their age range for youth varies. In Rwanda youth are considered to be between the ages of 13-35. People in the West want to have age ranges to define who people are, and to clearly define ethnicity. There are contentions in the U.S. as well. Culturally, it has to do with transition from childhood to adulthood.

Q: You mentioned Dar Es Salaam as a great place to be a youth because you are a witness to god and not to gerontocracy?

A: You can reinvent yourself in the city. Identity for a saved person (evangelical) is a very important identity for the poor urban youth the rule of thumb has been that groups successfully working with them are religious groups, Muslim and Christian Pentecostal and Evangelical faiths. Remarkable things are being done with these youth they make room for that, creating a network of trust. While these programs are very strict and most youth don't want to go in that direction, it works very well for those that will accept these rules.

The situation these youth are in they are on their own, one has to assess the risk, most Rwandan youth are risk averse, so desperate people go into the city, which is not the case in East Africa where there are networks that help people come into the cities.

Q: In regards to the question of relationship networks, did you find that some people responded in the question of "who would help you with this plan?" by mentioning these relationship networks? If not, why not?

A: 9% said perhaps family or friends might help but, even those answers did not necessarily mean migration.

Q: Recommendations you will be making?

A: This will be a pedagogical experience for the governments; in terms of the way it operates actually is a function of culture and how powerful people deal with those affected by it. In regards to the decentralization of Rwanda, the youth want the government to come close to them to help them, but this is not the same way that the government seeks to get closer in order to better control the youth. The question is how do people in government interact with those who are not part of it? There is a need to deal with how people interact, the issue of roofing has to be addressed, and that secondary school is not necessarily the most important issue for youth.

Another issue is that urban youth do not know how to save money. Dynamics are very different.

Q: When doing data collection was a distinction made between adopted and biological children and differences that might come out from that?

A: The aim was to get a reasonable sample of youth. We did not get into those issues. Striking how little information there is about youth. Not a lot of focus on youth in Rwanda. Youth are included in research on AIDS etc., but there is no focus on youth in and of itself. There is a great focus on orphans, widows and so the layer of youth and poor youth hasn't been looked at yet. That is what we sought to balance.

### **Information Sharing:**

- Machel Strategic Review approached Randolph to host meeting to provide input on this review. { HYPERLINK "[http://www.un.org/children/conflict/\\_documents/machel/MachelStrategicReviewProposal-en.pdf](http://www.un.org/children/conflict/_documents/machel/MachelStrategicReviewProposal-en.pdf)" }
- US Campaign to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers strategy meeting, around the Child Soldiers Protection Act. Meeting Wednesday, June 27<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 2pm
- Last month NDI hosted a seminar on engaging young people in politics in conflict context, youth role in the election and Liberia, available on webcast May 16<sup>th</sup> event, on the Woodrow Wilson website. { HYPERLINK "[http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event\\_summary&event\\_id=235930](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event_summary&event_id=235930)" }. Can send draft of case studies based on this and will be coming out with a toolkit in the fall regarding that issue. More than happy to get any thoughts on that.
- Publication with all the presentations available in the fall. Recommendations for Interns in strong writing skills, editing and interest in this field most wanted
- Rwanda survey, 55 semi-structured interviews, public health information in context of genocide. Three publications coming out soon.
- Child Soldier Initiative: Phase II role-playing Scenario with practitioners or experts in child protection. { HYPERLINK "<http://www.childsoldiersinitiative.org/phase2.html>" }