Youth bulges in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East have led to fears of increased violence as these regions are flooded with young men. As much as 90% of violence globally is perpetrated by men and boys and young men particularly fill the ranks of gangs, militias and armies, suggesting that masculinity plays a role in conflict and youth violence. However, young men are not inherently violent or dangerous. Pressures put on young men by a lack of resources, options, and opportunities combined with societal pressures to be forceful and dominant push young men into roles that they do not need to play. Through reports on Rwanda, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic and South Asia, the panel will explore: What drives young men towards violence? What prevents it? How might changes in attitudes towards men and masculinity impact youth violence?

Speakers

Maria Correia
South Asia Social Development Sector Manager, World Bank

Lena Slachmijilder
Chief Programming Officer, Search for Common Ground

Marc Sommers
Fellow, Woodrow Wilson Center

Moderator

Julia Roig
President, Partners for Democratic Change

Speaker Bios:

Maria Correia
Maria Correia is the Social Development Sector Manager in the South Asia Region of the World Bank, where among other things she covers gender and conflict-related issues. A Canadian national, she joined the World Bank in 1994 and has held several positions in the Latin America and Caribbean Region and Sub-Saharan Africa Region. Over her career, she has specialized in gender and development and youth issues, and more recently on young men at risk. Her publications on these topics include The Other Half of Gender: Men’s Issues in Development (co-edited with Ian Bannon: The Economics of Gender in Mexico: Work, Family, State and Market (co-edited with Elizabeth Katz) and Caribbean Youth Development (co-written with Wendy Cunningham). Prior to moving to the South Asia Region late last year, Maria managed the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Program in Central Africa, a regional seven-country program that demobilized and reintegrated back into society some 350,000 ex-combatants.

Lena Slachmijilder
Lena Slachmijilder is the Chief Programming Officer at Search for Common Ground. Prior to her current
position, she lived and worked in Africa for 21 years as a journalist, editor, human rights defender, director, producer, performing artist, cultural facilitator, trainer, and project manager. Ms. Slachmijlder has worked with Search for Common Ground since 2001, heading Studio Ijambo while being the Great Lakes Media Manager based at Search Burundi. In 2005, she became Country Director in DR Congo, growing the project to be Search’s largest, with seven offices around the country working on repatriation, sexual violence, governance, elections, security sector reform, and regional cohesion. In the DRC, Lena pioneered tools such as participatory theatre, a reality TV show, and innovative approaches to army and police reform. She has trained journalists and peace builders on all continents, has been an invited speaker to more than a dozen international conferences, wrote and produced a documentary film about Burundi’s ‘Heroes’ and has supported Search’s work in Nepal, Indonesia, Cote d’Ivoire, Rwanda and Krygyzstan. Lena is fluent in English, French, and Zulu and has working knowledge of Swahili, Lingala, and Kirundi.

Marc Sommers
Marc Sommers has researched youth and gender concerns in many war and post-war countries, most recently in Rwanda, Sierra Leone and South Sudan. He is a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and a Visiting Researcher with Boston University’s African Studies Center. Over the past 22 years, he has carried out research, assessment and evaluation work in 20 war-affected countries, largely concentrating on education, child soldier, conflict negotiation, urbanization and coordination issues, in addition to youth and gender. Recent or forthcoming publications include two books: Stuck: Rwandan Youth and the Struggle for Adulthood (Univ. of Georgia Press, 2011), and Marley’s War: Terror and Transformation in Sierra Leone (USIP Press, 2013); and two USIP Special Reports: Youth in Rwanda and Burundi: Contrasting Visions in Two Post-Conflict States (with Peter Uvin), and Dowry and Division: Youth and State Building in South Sudan (with Stephanie Schwartz). An earlier book, Fear in Bongoland: Burundi Refugees in Urban Tanzania (2001), received the 2003 Margaret Mead Award.

Currently, Dr. Sommers is writing a book on youth and conflict in Africa at the Wilson Center.

Moderator Bio:

Julia Roig
Julia Roig is the President of Partners for Democratic Change, where she is responsible for overall strategic direction, overseeing the DC-based Partners team, and providing technical and strategic leadership to the global network of 18 Partners affiliate Centers for Change and Conflict Management. Ms. Roig is an attorney licensed in the state of Maryland with fifteen years of diverse international management experience. She is a substantive expert in Good Governance, Public Participation, Access to Justice and Conflict Resolution, and has provided systems design, strategic planning, cooperative advocacy, program management, community outreach and training throughout the world. Prior to joining Partners, Julia served for two years as the Country Director for the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative in Belgrade, Serbia. She is also a recognized expert on community justice and dispute resolution in Colombia having spent five years living and working from Bogota, promoting a national expansion of the Equity Conciliation and Justice Houses programs. Julia has specialized in the evaluation of international assistance programs and impact assessments, and has served as team leader for complex, multi-country evaluations in Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru and Senegal.