West Africa's Youth Employment Challenge
The Case of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire

Marc Sommers
Consultant
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
&
Associate Research Professor of Humanitarian Studies
Institute of Human Security
The Fletcher School
Tufts University
Medford, MA U.S.A.

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Introduction

A visit to Liberia in early 2005 shed light on the considerable challenge of providing employment opportunities for youth in Liberia and its immediate neighbors (Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire). While visiting a rural village to learn about a youth training programme, talk turned to the majority of the community's youth, who were not programme participants.

A male youth spoke up. He was not a member of the programme, but was supervising rubber tappers on a nearby plantation. "Everybody's hot," he said. "The youth here act like rebels. It's everywhere." Youth who were abducted or joined rebel groups during the civil war had left their communities "as children," the man continued. "But they came back with a wife and children, and now you can't control them." These young men and women are unemployed, largely uneducated, and carry out what is known as "rebel behavior." In village after village, youth and adults alike said that the actions of former rebels had influenced most youth. Due to this influence, many had taken to borrowing money without repaying it, drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana, taking things that did not belong to them, and using slang phrases and words.

An example of the slang that 'rebel youth' employ, one male youth explained, is "You're below us." This is not an insignificant expression, because it indicates how some youth view themselves as independent of pre-war norms and expectations that kept youth subordinate to powerful elders. Elders in Liberia and elsewhere in the region had traditionally controlled young men's ability to acquire land and marry. They also required youth to contribute community labor with limited or no compensation.[1] In response to rebellious youth who opt out of community obligations and carry out asocial, 'rebel' behavior, a group of village elders explained how they ostracize them. As one explained, "If youth live here with that rebel behavior, we chase them away." Another elder stated it plainly: "What we want in the community is what youth do for us."

Times are changing. Indications of youth challenging the *status quo* in post-war West Africa were also evident in the capital city of Monrovia, where more than one in three Liberians reside[2] and where, in October 2004, extensive rioting by thousands of urban youth took place. Many of the rioters were reportedly frustrated, unemployed ex-combatants seeking expected benefits.[3] The riots helped call attention to youth concerns, including spurring sufficient initiative and support to complete Liberia's National Youth

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[1] Paul Richards, "Young Men and Gender in War and Postwar Reconstruction: Some Comparative Findings from Liberia and Sierra Leone," *The Other Half of Gender: Men's Issues in Development*, Ian Bannon and Maria C. Correia, eds. (Washington, World Bank, 2006).

[2] An estimated 1.3 million out of 3.3 million people in Liberia, or 39% of all Liberians. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Liberia: 2007* (Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 2007), p. 3.

[3] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Liberia: December 2004* (Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 2004), p. 2, UN OCHA, "Monrovia Riots may have been Linked to Problems in the Disarmament and Demobilisation Process," Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, Nov. 7, 2004, (http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/53B8EE7E8C186 E02802570B8005AAE43?OpenDocument)

Policy, a Liberian familiar with the process reported. This policy highlights the need to expand employment for youth.

Youth employment in Liberia and elsewhere in West Africa has been viewed as "a key tool for conflict prevention." Millions of young people are unemployed or underemployed in a region with population and urban growth rates that "are among the highest in recorded history."[4] Yet striving to employ youth in the four West African nations to be examined here – Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire – calls for more than merely providing lots of jobs. In a region of the world where "the relationship between elders and youth is understood as inherently unequal and undemocratic,"[5] and where the "continued disregard" for youth aspirations "may well provoke instability since youth are often at the forefront of denunciations of injustice and demands for reform,"[6] considering youth perceptions and requirements for social recognition and acceptance is also required.

This report will examine the large and complex youth employment challenge in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, where there is an "urgent need to create employment for 4.5 million youth" and where over half of all youth lack proper work.[7] Mindful that much of the region's youth cohort is restive and unemployed, Liberia's 'rebel behavior' and ex-combatant youth among them, the report will also consider the implications of providing 'productive and decent work' for youth; that is, work that promises to put youth on the road towards acquiring respect and professional development as well as compensation. The report will conclude with a description of an employment programme for some of the region's most marginalized and overlooked: poor, unemployed urban youth.

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[4] United Nations Office for West Africa, *Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa* (United Nations Office for West Africa, 2005), pp. 9-10.

[5] Mary H. Moran, *Liberia: The Violence of Democracy* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2006), p. 143.

[6] United Nations Office for West Africa, *Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa*, p. 9.

[7] United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office for West Africa, Youth Employment Network, *Productive and Decent Work for Youth in the Mano River Union: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and in Côte d'Ivoire* (United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office for West Africa, Youth Employment Network, 2007), pp. 1-2.

Contours of the Youth Employment Challenge in Four West African Nations

There is likely no region in the world where providing successful youth employment programming is more necessary and more difficult than the West African region that this study will consider – the nations of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. The four countries are all unquestionably among the world's poorest.[8] They also have one of the world's youngest populations (almost three in four people in the region are under age 30).[9] The vast numbers of marginalized and vulnerable youth have been directly connected to past violence and a possible return to instability.[10] Efforts to combat corruption have had limited success thus far, with the result that youth, in particular, and the population in general, have limited trust in Government institutions.

The four West African countries have experienced exposure to multifaceted threats resulting in economic, social and military insecurity. The framework for much of this discussion is based on the following presumption: that an estimated "two billion people" (that is, slightly less than 1 in 3 human beings) reside in "countries that are in danger of collapse." This has inspired a series of lists of "countries about to go over the brink."[11] While the descriptions may be attention grabbing, even alarmist, the general thrust of the arguments is to consider what might be done to keep unusually weak states from falling entirely apart.

Significantly, none of the four countries has fallen over any cliffs since these dire predictions were made a few short years ago. On the contrary: some signs of progress towards political and economic stability are being achieved in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire:

- Guinea's newly appointed Prime Minister, Lansana Kouyaté, is developing a new national economic recovery programme, and external relations are improving. At the same time, the domestic situation reportedly remains "highly fragile," while "the potential for conflict to arise" in a nearby country (most likely Côte d'Ivoire) and "spill over" into Guinea is thought to be a real possibility.[12]
- Liberia's post-war government, under the helm of the continent's first woman head of state, Elizabeth Johnson-Sirleaf, has embarked on ambitious reforms following a disastrous civil war period (1989-2003). The current government is achieving success in battling government corruption and promoting accountability in government, rebuilding a faltering judicial system, police force and military. It is also launching a truth and reconciliation commission. Mammoth problems remain, however, including an annual urbanization rate that peaked at an

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[8] Liberia's per capita income is the third lowest in the world (USD $130), while Sierra Leone's has the fifth lowest rate (USD $220) and Guinea's rank is fifteenth (USD $370). Côte d'Ivoire's per capita rate is somewhat higher (USD $840). Elizabeth Leahy, *The Shape of Things to Come: Why Age Structure Matters to a Safer, More Equitable World* (Population Action International, Washington, 2007), pp. 87-90.

[9] The four-country average is 71.3%; as reported in Leahy 2007, *Shape of Things to Come*, 87-90.

[10] United Nations Office for West Africa, *Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa.*

[11] Anonymous, "The Failed States Index," *Foreign Policy* (July/Aug. 2005 (149), pp. 56-65), p. 55.

[12] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Guinea: September 2007* (Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 2007), pp. 6, 7.

astonishing 58% in 2005,[13] and "a lack of job opportunities" in the nation, which "has led many, particularly ex-combatants, to take up looting and banditry."[14]

- September 2007 elections in the aftermath of Sierra Leone's destructive civil war (1991-2002) have returned the All People's Congress (APC) to power. President Ernest Bou Koroma has promised to "adopt zero tolerance on corruption and mismanagement of state resources."[15] At the same time, despite the "improving security atmosphere" in the country, "the plight of the young and unemployed... represent a considerable threat to the country's security."[16]
- While Côte d'Ivoire remains tensely divided between government and opposition-controlled areas, a peace agreement is in force, a new power-sharing arrangement is underway, and national elections are anticipated. At the same time, the political situation remains unsteady, the small and medium-sized business sectors have been devastated, "a large share of economic activity has been transferred to the informal sector," "and there remains a "vast pool of under-employed urban youth in Abidjan."[17]

Despite indications of stabilization and limited progress in the region, prodigious vulnerabilities remain. This is illustrated by the United Kingdom's Department for International Department designation of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire as "fragile states."[18] One of the core characteristics is impoverishment, and a glance at available statistics sheds additional light on the difficulties that the region's people face. Of the 177 countries ranked according to UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) of 2006, Sierra Leone holds the unfortunate status of second lowest in the world.[19] The struggles of Côte d'Ivoire, once a country that generated steady economic growth, are illustrated by its ranking of 164 on the HDI index. Guinea's rank, at 160, is only marginally better. Liberia, still emerging from a ruinous civil war, is among 17 nations that lack enough statistics to be included in the ranking (alongside nations such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia). Nonetheless, UNDP states that life expectancy in Liberia is a mere 42.5 years of age, and 49% of the population is under-nourished.[20]

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[13] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Liberia: 2007* (Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 2007), p. 16.

[14] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Liberia: September 2007* (Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 2007), p. 6.

[15] Associated Press, 2007, "Sierra Leone's New President Inaugurated," September 17. (http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/africa/09/17/sierra.leone.elections.ap/index.html)

[16] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Sierra Leone: September 2007* (Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 2007), p. 7.

[17] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Côte d'Ivoire: 2007* (Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 2007), pp. 17.

[18] Department for International Development (United Kingdom), *Why We Need to Work More Effectively in Fragile States* (Department for International Development, London, January 2005).

[19] Only Niger ranks lower, and that is a recent development. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2006: Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis* (United Nations Development Programme, New York, and Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2006), p. 286.

[20] United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2006: Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis*, pp. 286, 287.

In addition, the region's economic performance is among the world's worst. Over a recent 15-year period (1990-2004), only Guinea had a positive average annual growth rate (1%), while Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone had negative rates (−1.1% and −5.5%, respectively). Only the Democratic Republic of the Congo had a lower annual rate than Sierra Leone (−6%).[21] Statistics for Liberia's economic growth rate are not listed, but Liberia's economy was wrecked during the civil war period. Illustrative of this was the discovery, during an early 2005 visit, that the nation's entire electricity grid consisted of perhaps four square blocks in Monrovia. Despite such challenges, Liberia's real GDP growth is estimated to reach a remarkable 8.5% in 2007.[22]

Youth unemployment, indeed, is a problem that plagues all four nations, including nearly a third of all youth in Côte d'Ivoire[23] and between 60% and 70% of all Sierra Leonean youth.[24] In Liberia, the youth unemployment rate is an astounding 88 per cent.[25] It also suggests, given the expanse of unemployed youth in the region, that most have been unusually patient and peaceful. Just how long this unsteady peace can hold, however, is unclear. The consensus of most observers seems to be that the youth unemployment situation is explosive.

The youth employment challenge confronting Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, on sheer need alone, is colossal. However, the challenge is made much more difficult because of a number of serious contributing factors, some of which have been reviewed in this section. They include minimal or no economic growth, stunted formal economic sectors, serious state corruption and accountability problems, high economic inequality, and persistent political instability (particularly in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire). Evidence of social, political and economic distance between poor youth and those with power and influence (a legacy of the involvement of many youth in rebellion and resistance), the movement of increasing numbers of youth to cities, and the limited levels of educational achievement of many youth people, are still other factors that make efforts to provide employment for youth unusually necessary and difficult.

In advance of proposing a way forward, the next section will highlight two largely misunderstood and underestimated youth development locations: cities and informal sectors. While rural youth and the formal economic sector will also be examined (and are common areas for youth development), the thrust of this section is to shed light on the fact that many if not most youth in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire are already residing in cities and engaged in informal market activities. These trends form the starting point for youth engagement, and there is little evidence, or reasonable possibility,

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[21] United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2006: Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis*, p. 334.
[22] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Liberia: September 2007* (Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 2007), p. 9.
[23] The precise figure is 31%, in Project d'aide mémoire sur l'insertion des jeunes en Côte d'Ivoire, 2003
[24] UN support to the Sierra Leone NYEP, June 2006. Although no unemployed youth figures are available for Guinea, it is assumed that they are similarly substantial.
[25] Government of Liberia, *Millennium Development Goals Report 2004* (Government of Liberia, Monrovia, September 2004), p. 7.

that either will markedly change any time soon (the trends instead point to further expansion).

Accordingly, the next section will first examine the urbanization phenomenon and highlight urban and rural youth differences in West Africa generally and in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire in particular. Next, it will contrast growth opportunities in the region's informal and formal economic sectors. Then it will argue that mainstream youth employment approaches that concentrate efforts in rural areas and formal markets, by themselves, are highly unlikely to succeed in a region plagued by an unusually high number of pressing uncertainties and challenges, and where youth are expanding in opposite directions – towards cities and informal markets. Relying exclusively on rural-based, growth-oriented policies, in short, will not resolve the youth employment problems in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire both because the challenges are too large and complex and the approach runs directly against the persistent advance of urbanization and informal market activity.

Locations and Sectors

Pressures on Urban and Rural Youth

Urbanization is radically reshaping West Africa, and is a fundamental dimension of the youth employment challenge. Despite the region's reputation for rural life and traditions, West Africa's population is not only growing but, to a significant extent, moving. While the population will have grown ten times larger in a century (1930-2030), West Africa's urban population will increase by one hundred times over the same period.[26] In the region of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, the proportion of urban dwellers in the overall population is already substantial. Over half of all Liberians (60%) and Gambians (56%) live in urban areas. Given current annual urbanization rates, very soon over half of all Ivorians and Sierra Leoneans will reside in cities, too.[27] A great many of these new urbanites will continue to be youth without work: one of the main factors of West Africa's growing unemployment in urban areas is the migration of "millions of young men and women" to the region's cities.[28]

The existence of prodigious numbers of youth in West African cities has given rise to far more alarm than constructive engagement. Kaplan famously peered at youth in Côte d'Ivoire's capital, Abidjan, and declared that they were, together with much of the rest of West Africa's allegedly fearsome urban youth cohort, "out of school, unemployed, loose molecules in an unstable social fluid that threatened to ignite." Curiously, he did not find

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[26] Jean-Marie Cour and David Naudet, "West Africa in 2020," *OECD Observer* (June/July 1996 (No. 200), pp. 20-26), p. 20.
[27] 46% of Ivorians and 42% of Sierra Leoneans reside urban areas. Their annual urban growth rates are: 2.7% for Côte d'Ivoire and 3.8% for Sierra Leone. United Nations Population Fund, *UNFPA State of World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth* (United Nations Population Fund, New York, 2007), pp. 90-91.
[28] United Nations Office for West Africa, *Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa*, p. 11.

the presence of contrasting evidence – the youth's "robust health and good looks" – to be a positive sign: instead, it only "made their predicament sadder." Highlighting his impressions of Abidjan and Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, Kaplan is nothing if not negative about West Africa's urban youth.[29] The well-known Richards retort draws almost entirely from research on youth in rural, and not urban, Sierra Leone.[30]

The pronounced tendency to direct one's attention beyond West Africa's burgeoning cities, despite their size and magnetic attraction to so many youth, is illustrated by depictions of where development opportunities are thought to exist. To begin with, African cities in general don't make much sense to outsiders. Most African cities lack the industrial base, capital investment and service provision that urban development in many other parts of the world relied on. The apparently counterintuitive shift of so many young Africans to poor urban areas confounds many scholars, such as Hope, who observed that, "In general, African countries are substantially more urbanized than is probably justified by their degree of economic development."[31] The expansion of urban populations in Africa is thus thought to be caused more by population growth than by economic development.[32]

This is precisely the sort of outsider analysis that Cour and Naudet critique. In their view, too many analysts make judgments about Africa and Africans before underlying processes are appreciated. Since the continent is undergoing major transformations at the moment (not just urbanization, but population growth, openness to the outside world, and increased competition as well), "most analysts are probably largely mistaken about what is happening in Africa." The authors add that the Western international aid community "finds it hard to do other than reproduce its own patterns of interest" when addressing Africa's development needs. International aid investment priorities have changed every decade or so, from infrastructure in the 1950s to industrialization in the 1960s, and from a "quest for a new world order and the denunciation of unequal trade" in the 1970s to insisting on financial rigor and liberalization in the 1980s. Africa's expanding urbanization, in addition, is thought to be part of a "negative perception of change" there.[33] So it is generally ignored.

However, perceptions of Africa's youth-led urbanization as economically nonsensical or somehow distasteful are not only misleading but – much more important – counterproductive. There is no evidence that more than 'a trickle'[34] of urban youth in

[29] Robert D. Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Random House, New York, 1996), p. 16.

[30] Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (James Currey, Oxford; and Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1996).

[31] Kempe Ronald Hope, Sr. "Urbanization and Urban Growth in Africa," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 33(4), pp. 345-358), p. 356.

[32] Panel on Urban Population Dynamics, *Cities Transformed: Demographic Change and Its Implications in the Developing World* (Washington, National Academies Press, 2003), p. 93.

[33] Jean-Marie Cour and David Naudet, "West Africa in 2020," *OECD Observer*, p. 26.

[34] Osita Ogbu and Gerrishon Ikiara, "The Crisis of Urbanisation in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Courier* 149 (Jan.-Feb.), 1995), p. 54.

Africa ever return to live in rural areas.[35] No case dramatizes the urge for many African youth to urbanize more than internally displaced youth from southern Sudan who fled to the base of the opposition side in the recent civil war – Khartoum, Sudan's capital city. There, after a decade living in squalor and regularly facing threats, intimidation, bulldozed houses and much more from government authorities, displaced youth in particular nonetheless experienced "a fundamental shift in identity" and considered themselves "to be urbanized" with "no real desire to return to their rural origins."[36] To be sure, Africa's urban youth "have a strong resolve to remain there."[37]

The reasons for rural-urban migration by African youth extend beyond economic motivations. Youth in war and post-war situations (such as those in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire) "often seem to prefer urban centres" because villages lack "entertainment." Many youth are disinterested in dedicating themselves to agriculture.[38] African youth find opportunities for coexistence, reinvention and empowerment in cities. Some male youth use urban migration as a "rite of passage into manhood." In such cases, surviving in cities is viewed as a mark of success; "a challenge that must be surmounted, regardless of the cost."[39] Former child combatants are a group that has a particular interest in living in cities, both because they are afraid to return to rural homes and because they consider rural living unattractive.[40]

The push factors that lead youth away from rural areas are no less compelling. Perhaps the most powerful influence is the range of difficulties that youth face in becoming recognized as adults. Utas, for example, argues that Liberia's civil war "was partially an outcome of the structural marginalization of youth." State collapse led increasing numbers of urban male youth to be excluded from the possibility of becoming adults: they could not find wage labor or access to education, and so lost opportunities to "establish themselves as adults" by building a house or getting married. Many had children out of wedlock but could not afford to support them. As these male youth grew older, they became not adults but 'youthmen' in society's eyes: older youth who never become socially accepted as adults. Marginalization and deep dissatisfaction in post-war

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[35] Marc Sommers, "Youth, War and Urban Africa: Challenges, Misunderstandings, and Opportunities," *Youth Explosion in Developing World Cities: Approaches to Reducing Poverty and Conflict in an Urban Age*, Blair A. Ruble, Joseph S. Tulchin, Diana H. Varat, Lisa M. Hanley, eds. (Washington, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003), p. 30.

[36] Karen Jacobsen, Sue Lautze, and Abdal Monim Kheider Osman, "The Sudan" Unique Challenges of Displacement in Khartoum," *Caught between Borders: Response Strategies of the Internally Displaced*, Marc Vincent and Birgitte Refslund Sorensen, eds. (London, Pluto Press and Norwegian Refugee Council, 2001), p. 84.

[37] Murray Leibbrandt and Cecil Mlatsheni, *Youth in Sub-Saharan Labour Markets* (African Development and Poverty Reduction: The Macro-Micro Linkage. Forum Paper, 2004) (http://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/Research_Units/DPRU/DPRU-Conference2004/Papers/ Youth_in_SSA_CecilMlatshni.pdf), p. 5.

[38] Krijn Peters, Paul Richards and Koen Vlassenroot, *What Happens to Youth During and After Wars? A Preliminary Review of Literature on Africa and an Assessment of the Debate* (RAWOO Working Paper, October 2003) (www.rawoo.nl/pdf/youthreport.pdf), p. 28.

[39] Marc Sommers, "Youth, War and Urban Africa: Challenges, Misunderstandings, and Opportunities," p. 36.

[40] Krijn Peters, Paul Richards and Koen Vlassenroot, *What Happens to Youth During and After Wars? A Preliminary Review of Literature on Africa and an Assessment of the Debate*, p. 28.

Liberia, Utas concludes, "appears to be the norm for a large proportion of young urbanites."[41]

The primary difficulties facing rural male youth are different in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. In at least some Sierra Leonean rural villages, the ability of elders to control access to land "enables them to dominate youth and their labor." Such rural youth, particularly male youth, "leave rural areas because they cannot clearly calculate the returns on investment of their only asset (labor) due to the often continuing arbitrary use of custom by elders to 'tax' (their) labor." Male youth respond to this inherent vulnerability by migrating either to urban or mining areas in search of work.[42] Difficulties facing rural Ivorian youth are different because the problem is much less control of youth by elders than the encroachment of state-supported migrant planters and merchant capital investors on local lands.[43] In rural Côte d'Ivoire (or at least the western areas where Chauveau and Richards conducted their research), land rather than labour was found to be "the nub of the agrarian tensions."[44]

The urban exodus has significantly influenced rural youth life in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. To begin with, it has radically changed the demographic composition of young people living in rural and urban areas. Male youth in rural areas, not their female counterparts, are dislodged or undermined by elders and/or the government. Rural women generally are also severely threatened in the four countries under discussion: Richards, for example, points out that while women's property and marriage rights date back to slave era traditions, they still customarily lose access to land if they are divorced or their husband dies.[45] Yet far fewer female than male youth tend to migrate from rural to urban areas. A World Bank survey in Sierra Leone, for example, found that only 42 percent of rural residents between ages 20 and 34 were male. The reasons given for this were that more male youth were killed or migrated to town during the civil war.[46]

War, instability and poverty have fostered generally low levels of educational accomplishment and vocational skills among nearly all youth, in the four countries considered here. All four have high youth illiteracy rates. In fact, only in Côte d'Ivoire is

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[41] Mats Utas, "Building a Future? The Reintegration and Remarginalization of Youth in Liberia," *No Peace No War: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, Paul Richards, ed. (Athens, Ohio University Press; Oxford, James Currey, 2005), p. 150.

[42] World Bank, *Improving Opportunities for Sustainable Youth Employment in Sierra Leone*, (Washington, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Unit, West Africa, World Bank, Report No. XXX-SL), pp. 11, 12.

[43] Jean-Pierre Chauveau and Paul Richards, *West African Insurgencies in Agrarian Perspective: Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone Compared* (unpublished document), p. 26.

[44] Jean-Pierre Chauveau and Paul Richards, *West African Insurgencies in Agrarian Perspective: Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone Compared*, p. 27.

[45] Paul Richards, "Young Men and Gender in War and Postwar Reconstruction: Some Comparative Findings from Liberia and Sierra Leone," *The Other Half of Gender: Men's Issues in Development*, Ian Bannon and Maria C. Correia, eds. (Washington, The World Bank, 2006), p. 213.

[46] World Bank, *Improving Opportunities for Sustainable Youth Employment in Sierra Leone*, p. 9.

there more youth who can read than who cannot.[47] Frustrations appear to run high for many if not most youth in rural and urban areas. It is difficult for many youth to get ahead. The reasons are various, but tend to include some combination of limited education and skills as well as difficulties in gaining social and economic stability, as access to vital elements like land, capital and marriage are hard to acquire. Rural youth are partly stymied by difficulties created by powerful elders, poor infrastructure, and some state policies, while urban youth are frustrated by a general lack of economic opportunities and supports.

One thing seems clear, however: while much of the region's warfare has roots in rural youth frustrations, many of the most restive youth today are now in cities and are unlikely to ever leave. An appropriate response to the region's youth employment challenge should combine support for rural youth (so they can prosper in villages) as well as urban youth (so they can stabilize their lives in cities). In both cases, gaining social acceptance is a core part of the package, as warnings about threats from marginalized, frustrated youth are commonplace. The evidence strongly suggests that conflict is not a cause of this crisis (as suggested by Ankomah)[48] as much as a hugely destructive outcome from youth who were frustrated by their inability to advance. Stabilizing the region, accordingly, will require more than additional jobs for youth. As Utas noted with regard to marginalized Liberian youth, "Enlistment in the armies, in the first place, was envisaged as a move away from the margin and into the centre of society – a means of integrating in society, even if by force."[49]

The Formal-Informal Sector Divide

The so-called informal sector is, by far, Africa's predominant economic sector. Two in three working Africans work there, and it is growing at an estimated overall rate of 7% per year. More than 90% of all future jobs in Africa are expected to reside within the informal sector.[50] It constitutes "the everyday environment" for at least half of all Sub-Saharan Africans.[51] Also known as the "popular economy," among many other things,[52] it is claimed to be "the only option for young people who want to work" in Africa.[53]

The unregulated world of informal economic activity is the mainstay of poor and unusually enterprising people (who are quite often one and the same). It is also a

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[47] Côte d'Ivoire's youth illiteracy rate is 39.3%, while Guinea's is 52.4% and Sierra Leone's is 53.4% (Liberia's rate was not listed, but it is thought to be over 60%). United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2006: Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis*, p. 326.
[48] Baffour Ankomah, "Mano River Youth: From Warriors to Peace Builders," *New African* (February 2005, pp. 40-43).
[49] Mats Utas, "Building a Future? The Reintegration and Remarginalization of Youth in Liberia," p. 151.
[50] Kenneth Karl, "The Informal Sector," *Courier* (December 1999-January 2000, no. 178), p. 53.
[51] Jacques Bugnicourt, "A Hope Ignored: The Informal or Popular Economy," *Courier* (December 1999-January 2000, no. 178), p. 55.
[52] Karl, for example, compiled a list of 30 other terms that are used to describe the informal sector or the informal economy. The list includes parallel, concealed, creeping, disguised, submarine, and unobserved. Kenneth Karl, "The Informal Sector," p. 54.
[53] Jacques Bugnicourt, "A Hope Ignored: The Informal or Popular Economy," p. 56.

longtime bugbear of development economists, government officials and others who, naturally enough, seek to expand the realm of regulated, official commerce, where "certain rights, duties and regulations are institutionalised."[54] Despite the promise of worker and enterprise protections (and access to potentially higher tax revenues for governments), the problems confronting such efforts are elemental, particularly in nations that combine significant economic weakness and political and social instability (such as Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire).

Three elemental problems will be mentioned here. First, employment grows extremely slowly in the formal sectors of most developing world economies (perhaps only 2-3% of new jobs are created there every year). In Africa, such figures cannot even keep up with annual urban growth rates, which average around 5 percent.[55] The result is that the proportion of formal sector jobs in urban African economies decreases over time. Such an approach to expanding youth employment, since it is slow and indirect, runs the risk of exacerbating youth frustrations, a factor that a recent study on youth in Côte d'Ivoire warned against. If "at-risk" youth, including ex-combatant youth, "remain idly un- or underemployed, there always remains the possibility that they will be 'attracted back to arms' in exchange for small amounts of money and kudos."[56]

A second problem is that African informal economies are huge while formal economies, as a rule, are not. Informal economies constitute the main, and perhaps only, viable location for most poor people to make money and for small enterprises to grow: it has been estimated, for example, that 78.2% of all non-agricultural employment in Sub-Saharan Africa lies in the informal sector.[57] It can reasonably be argued that just about every city and town street in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire hums with economic activities that are all, or nearly so, part of the informal economy.

Third, formal sector employment may be skewed against youth. This is reflected in a recent World Bank study in Sierra Leone, which found both that "Youth have few opportunities for salaried employment compared to adults" and that "Formal employment opportunities are significantly lower for youth" (than adults). The study also found that "self-employment" – a mainstay of informal sector economic activity – represented more than half of all employment in Sierra Leone, while only nine percent of the working population had jobs in the formal sector.[58]

Despite the fact that weak formal economies in poor countries (including four of the world's poorest: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire) have made informal economies necessary (and, many would argue, thriving), the tendency to overlook the enormity of informal sector economies, particularly the widespread engagement of the

[54] Patrick Develtere and Patrick Van Durme, "Social Exclusion, the Informal Sector and the Social Economy," *Courier* (December 1999-January 2000, no. 178), p. 68.

[55] Kenneth Karl, "The Informal Sector," p. 53.

[56] TechnoServe, *Cote d'Ivoire Youth Reinsertion Opportunity Study – Summary Report: Report for the World Bank: Prepared September – November 2006*, (unpublished document, 2007), p. 2.

[57] Jacques Charmes, "Evaluating the Extent of Non-Registration – Do We Accept the Challenge?" *Courier* (December 1999-January 2000, no. 178), p. 64.

[58] World Bank, *Improving Opportunities for Sustainable Youth Employment in Sierra Leone*, p. xiv.

young and the poor within them, is troubling in at least two ways. First, it invites distorted understandings of economic activity. Second, it can inspire potentially misguided solutions to creating jobs and economic growth. The narrowness of such assessments of African youth employment challenges is illuminated by one study on Anglophone Africa. The authors equate slow formal sector employment growth with slow economic growth and assert that "by far the most important reason behind the unemployment crisis" is that "there are no new jobs coming up."[59] While this may be accurate, it is impossible to be sure because economic and employment activities (including self-employment) within the larger informal sectors are not included in the assessment. The authors claim to be assessing all economic activity while merely examining a discrete segment of it.

However, the authors usefully find that supply-driven responses to job training without an understanding of where trainees will find employment can lead to market saturation and the creation of few or no new jobs.[60] This is a potentially dangerous approach in countries as poor and as full of so many frustrated and unemployed youth as Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, and it sheds light on the weakness of a mainstream youth employment effort: the tendency to want to train youth working in the informal sector in order to link them to jobs in private and public enterprises in the formal sector.[61] Again, as explained just above, this is an inherently problematic approach because most opportunities for job growth exist in informal sectors, not formal sectors. In the potentially explosive youth environments of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, creating expectations that are unlikely to be met is counterproductive, and perhaps dangerously so. Fueling instability in this way is also very likely avoidable. As Kanyenze, Mhone and Sparreboom state, "any training intervention should be based on a careful assessment of available job opportunities and opportunities for production that would require skills and therefore create a demand for training."[62]

Two False Assumptions

Most youth are either out of work or underemployed in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. The reasons are not only due to the much-repeated "crisis of youth"

[59] Godfrey Kanyenze, Guy C.Z. Mhone, and Theo Sparreboom, *Strategies to Combat Youth Unemployment and Marginalization in Anglophone Africa* (Harare, ILO/SAMAT Discussion Paper No. 14, Southern Africa Multidisciplinary Advisory Team, International Labour Organization, 2000), p. 4.
[60] Godfrey Kanyenze, Guy C.Z. Mhone, and Theo Sparreboom, *Strategies to Combat Youth Unemployment and Marginalization in Anglophone Africa*, p. 4.
[61] As described in the Sierra Leone government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of June 2005. United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Youth Employment Network, and United Nations Office for West Africa, *Best Practices, Policy Environment, Tools, and Methodologies for Youth Employment in West Africa* (United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Youth Employment Network, and United Nations Office for West Africa, undated), p. 22.
[62] Godfrey Kanyenze, Guy C.Z. Mhone, and Theo Sparreboom, *Strategies to Combat Youth Unemployment and Marginalization in Anglophone Africa*, p. 4.

there.[63] The sheer size of the region's youth population, and the vacuum of available opportunities, has surely inspired crisis conditions. At the same time, while the region has been plagued by conflict, and some youth have been directly involved as rebellious fighters grasping for their share, the overwhelming majority have not been violent rebels. That is still the case: given the enormity of unemployment, inequality, corruption, and impoverishment that plague this devastated region, it can reasonably be assumed that the region and its youthful population is restive. But it is also, again given the conditions that most young people face, extraordinarily peaceful.

Failed or inactive youth employment policies have contributed to the extreme youth unemployment situation. This failure cannot be said to be solely the fault of the unemployed. This situation is starting to change, with new and determined government-led policy efforts that aim to address youth employment. Nonetheless, the starting point for addressing youth unemployment in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire is to stop making the situation worse. Development packages for youth employment often emphasize rural and formal sector investments, even though youth are moving to cities and finding opportunities in informal economic sectors. A balanced approach is required, because youth, by their actions and motivations, have helped to make the region's cities and informal sectors growth areas.

Emphasizing rural and formal sector investment as youth employment remedies is based on two false assumptions. Both are inaccurate for the same reason: they fail to incorporate stated unemployed youth concerns before remedies are devised. Drawing from the views and needs of unemployed, socially and economically marginalized youth to shape youth employment strategies is urgently required in a region renowned for its youthfulness, volatility, instability, poverty, and corruption.

The first assumption helps fire a widespread emphasis on rural development as a youth remedy: that rural investment will attract large numbers of urban youth back to the countryside. This assumption is based on scholar and practitioner analysis of African urbanization, which is largely in macroeconomic terms. Most analysts of African urbanization do not interview the youth who are driving urbanization, and so may not appreciate that the urge to urbanize is not merely economic. Accordingly, rural-based policies that hope to attract urban youth to rural areas can be inherently problematic from the start. This is illustrated by a donor government official who plainly explained her agency's determination to invest in rural Liberia: "The way forward for youth is agriculture, whether they like it or not."[64] But most urban youth do not budge from their city perches unless they choose to, and again, there is almost no evidence that attracting (or forcing) urban youth back to their former rural homes ever succeeds. Furthermore, the

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[63] See, for example, Paul Richards, "Rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone: A Crisis of Youth?" *Conflict in Africa*, O.W. Furley, ed. (London, I.B. Tauris, 1995); and Mary H. Moran, *Liberia: The Violence of Democracy*.

[64] Marc Sommers, "Embracing the Margins: Working with Youth amid War and Insecurity," *Too Poor for Peace? Poverty, Conflict and Security in the 21st Century*, Lael Brainard and Derek Chollet, eds. (Washington, Brookings Institution Press, 2007), p. 108.

World Bank study on youth employment in Sierra Leone found that programmes which aim to "repatriate (youth) to the countryside are ineffective."[65]

A second mistaken assumption draws from *laissez-faire* economic approaches that call for expanding youth employment through indirect means: by directing support at formal sector enterprises. While this may be seen as a viable longer-term strategy, it may be potentially disastrous in the short term in the insecure environments in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. Given that most youth in this region are unskilled and poorly educated, the result of such an approach may be an expansion of nothing more than menial jobs. Such an approach could backfire because the remedy does not address the need for marginalized youth to gain acceptance and positive recognition in society. Cognizant of the social limitations and frustrations that so many youth in Liberia and Sierra Leone face, Richards argues that greater involvement of male youth in post-war development requires a recognition "that low skill/low wage work acts as a trap to the self advancement and transition to adulthood of a majority of young men, undermining social cohesion and fostering violence."[66]

While this may be an overstatement (low skill and low wage work, after all, may be the only immediate opportunity available to many unemployed youth), providing such work without a capacity building component runs the risk of further alienating members of the marginalized, unemployed youth target group. This is illustrated by a series of reports (all from private interviews) about a youth public works programme in Liberia. Hatched by a high-profile diplomat (and, evidently, with little input from the target group), the widely publicized Liberia Community Infrastructure Project (LCIP) started in 2004 and initially engaged ex-combatants and other at-risk Liberian youth to carry out infrastructure-related work (such as cleaning sewers and maintaining roads) as paid day laborers. Several reports related how the project proved controversial with youth. Certain kinds of work that they did was stigmatizing and invited ridicule – precisely the opposite of what already marginalized youth, and ex-combatants in particular, might seek. Worse, it was dead end work: it merely provided a daily wage for a limited time, and nothing more. There was no skills training or capacity building of any kind, and no way to use this experience to reduce their sense of social exclusion (Monrovia's riots, mentioned at the outset of this study, also took place in 2004). Only later, after, reportedly, widespread complaints from youth laborers, did LCIP belatedly add a skills training component (also in exchange for payment). This effort has reportedly not been evaluated.

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[65] World Bank, *Improving Opportunities for Sustainable Youth Employment in Sierra Leone*, p. xix.
[66] Paul Richards, "Young Men and Gender in War and Postwar Reconstruction: Some Comparative Findings from Liberia and Sierra Leone," p. 215.

**Including Urban Youth and Informal Markets: Towards an Effective Youth
Employment Approach**

One thread connecting many foreign aid disappointments and mistakes is that the target
group is generally not consulted or engaged when projects and programmes are designed,
monitored or evaluated. Easterly argues that "the main problem with foreign aid is the
lack of feedback from the poor themselves, and accountability to these same poor." [67]
Uvin has suggested that the tendency to emphasize aggregate outcomes instead of micro-
level distributions when evaluating development projects can lead to results that "may
coincide with increased clientelism, corruption, inequality, exclusion, or insecurity for
certain groups."[68] A review of literature about youth programmes undertaken during or
after wars found a "scarcity of quality evaluation documents" and virtually no evidence
of lasting programme impact on youth lives.[69] This distressing state of affairs may not be
intended. It is also, at least to some degree, avoidable. And it most certainly can be
learned from.

This final section will describe an employment programme model for youth in Guinea,
Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire on the margins not only of local society but of
nearly all youth programmes and projects: those residing in cities and active in informal
economies. As this is a still-new approach for development and humanitarian agencies,
the model aims to begin as a pilot programme.

The programme model described here aims to complement other youth employment
approaches that are being or will be attempted. With regard to these other efforts, it is
first useful to draw from some of the most pertinent and relevant findings concerning
youth unemployment and recommendations in current literature and thinking, particularly
in documentation with specific reference to Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte
d'Ivoire.

Recommendations

The case has been made here to accept the dual realities that many youth in these four
countries are already in cities and are very likely to remain there, and that informal
markets provide the largest and most likely location for economic gain. But this is not to
say that rural areas or formal markets should be ignored. Instead, what is urged here is an
acceptance of these fundamental youth employment realities, and the development of
balanced strategies that respond to them. None of the primary publications on youth
employment in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, for example, contends
that developing better roads and markets for agricultural products in the region are not

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[67] William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much
Ill and So Little Good* (New York, Penguin Books, 2006), p. 380.
[68] Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*, p. 154.
[69] Marc Sommers, *Youth and Conflict: A Brief Review of Available Literature* (Washington, USAID and
Equip 3, 2006), p. 24. (http://www.equip123.net/docs/e3-YouthandConflictLitReview.pdf)

essential. They are. But so are recommendations, from sources such as the World Bank[70] and Richards,[71] to address the social and political constraints that thwart youth attempts to become adults.

Accordingly, attempts to expand employment for disempowered youth in this region must simultaneously account for the sources of youth disempowerment. Low wage, menial jobs, without any demand-driven employment training programming attached to them are dead end jobs, or perhaps worse: as the LCIP example illuminates, they can become a cause of increased youth frustration, embarrassment and social separation. Youth employment efforts, of course, also take place within economic systems, in all four countries, that are weak and grossly unequal. If such factors are ignored, then youth employment programming runs the risk of backfiring by exacerbating the inequalities and frustrations that can stir youth to the boiling point.

Governments and aid agencies should tread carefully, and remember that mainstream approaches to youth unemployment are unlikely to succeed, and may unintentionally make matters worse, in regional economies that are far from the mainstream. Established 'community' approaches to agricultural development, for example, run the risk of increasing youth frustrations and urban migration if they maintain or increase the stranglehold of elders or other elites over youth and their access to land, labor, marriage, and social acceptance. As the "rebel behavior" youth of Liberia so aptly demonstrate, the expanse of marginalized youth within the region makes 'mainstream' society narrow. Civil society has limited utility if much of the region's youthful population does not belong to it. For youth employment policies and programmes to succeed in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, much more than jobs, particularly low-end jobs, will be required. Providing productive and decent work for youth, in other words, will require addressing their primary social as well as economic concerns, so youth can gain respect and gainful opportunity as well as wages.

As a result, to promote lasting positive impact from youth employment policies and programming, the poor, marginalized youth target group, and their concerns, must recognized, accepted and directly engaged. As the World Bank notes about Sierra Leone, failure abounds in youth employment programming. Most programmes:
- are "poorly designed, mainly supply driven, and are short-term interventions with no follow-up;"
- "focus on short-term employment creation instead of sustainable employment;" and
- "focus disproportionately on training, with weak program development and limited links to labor market demand."

The World Bank recommends an approach that balances cost-effective programmes for sustainable youth employment for the short term with ambitious longer term reforms: more investment and policy reform to enhance economic growth, preparing youth for

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[70] World Bank, *Improving Opportunities for Sustainable Youth Employment in Sierra Leone*, pp. 93-103.
[71] Paul Richards, "Young Men and Gender in War and Postwar Reconstruction: Some Comparative Findings from Liberia and Sierra Leone," pp. 215-217.

entering jobs in growth sectors in the economy with targeted education and training, and addressing constraints that youth face beyond the labor market (including improving access to land and public employment opportunities).[72]

The World Bank's Sierra Leone study also found that "Youth programs have invested heavily in entrepreneurship development with limited success."[73] Three points will be made here before the programme model is described.

First, the record of evaluation of youth programmes is, on balance, appalling. It bears noting that a review of the evaluation record for programmes in war and post-war contexts was found to be, in general, exceedingly weak:

> Most (but not all) of the evaluation documents reviewed are not of high quality, and do not, for example, examine the lives of program graduates after programs have ended. Many also do not critically compare the situation of program participants to their counterparts who did not participate in programs. Indeed, profiles of which youth are in and not in a program is often either unclear or not mentioned. It is frequently difficult to determine the gender, class, educational accomplishment, war experience, household stability, and ethnicity of youth in these two groups.[74]

It is strongly recommended that sound, unbiased, professional, independent, and youth-inclusive assessment, monitoring and evaluation work be mainstreamed into all youth employment activities, with sufficient funds reserved to insure for quality evaluative action. Programmes – including those focusing on entrepreneurship development – should be designed to adjust their work as useful evaluation findings surface.

Second, youth employment programming has a strong tendency to emphasize male over female youth, as well as senior women over younger women or female youth. This tendency has been called "alarming" and a trend that "looks a good deal like exclusion."[75] The male youth bias appears to surface for a number of reasons, including the fact that it is male youth that governments and aid agencies are most afraid of. Marginalized male youth are thought of being the most potentially violent population, so they appear to have become the primary target youth group. But there are very likely other reasons. Gender programming may target older women instead of younger women (or female youth). Female youth may be harder to engage, and even locate, particularly in cities, where many poor female youth tend to live more private lives than their male youth counterparts. It has also been found to be the case that more women than men work in informal sectors in conflict-affected situations.[76]

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[72] World Bank, *Improving Opportunities for Sustainable Youth Employment in Sierra Leone*, p. xx-xxi.

[73] World Bank, *Improving Opportunities for Sustainable Youth Employment in Sierra Leone*, p. xx.

[74] Marc Sommers, *Youth and Conflict: A Brief Review of Available Literature*, p. 24.

[75] Marc Sommers, *Youth and Conflict: A Brief Review of Available Literature*, p. 25.

[76] Tsjeard Bouta, Georg Frerks, and Ian Bannon, *Gender, Conflict and Development* (Washington, World Bank, 2005), p. 94.

None of these reasons are reasonable or appropriate for narrowing employment-related programme access to female youth. Reaching and successfully engaging female youth through programming requires a recognition of particular factors and concerns that must be addressed, such as the location, specific needs (such as childcare during job training) and protection of female youth.[77]

Third, there is the challenge of class. Educated and unemployed youth have different requirements than their undereducated and unemployed youth counterparts. They qualify for different kinds of jobs. At the same time, educated, elite youth generally constitute a vocal yet tiny minority of the overall unemployed youth cohort in West Africa (and beyond). They tend to dominate youth representation in civil society, yet very likely do not adequately represent the views and concerns of the non-elite, marginalized youth majority.

What matters is not to overlook elite or non-elite youth, but to recognize that there are far more non-elite youth in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, and to primarily target non-elite youth. Youth from higher-class backgrounds appear to be the dominant corps of youth programme participants in conflict-affected areas.[78] Allowing this to occur may further frustrate their lower class youth counterparts.

An Employment Programme Model for Marginalized Urban Youth

The employment programme model for marginalized urban youth in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire aims to begin as a pilot experiment that will be monitored and evaluated over time. The programme will target poor, marginalized male and female youth in urban areas. Its central objective will be to work with them to build their confidence, life and work skills, economic stability and broader acceptance in society. The rationale is straightforward: helping some of the most marginalized people (poor urban youth) in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire become active and recognized contributors to the region's economy and society promises to contribute to regional stability and growth.

The model features the identification and training of qualified local youth to become Youth Employment Trainers. These trainers will identify and work separately with male and female youth groups (unless youth want their groups mixed) in urban neighborhoods. The trainers will help youth develop viable, demand-driven business plans over time. The programme's evaluation team will support this process by carrying out an analysis of the market sector that each youth group seeks to enter.

At the same time, the youth employment trainers will have regular interactions with each youth group, and provide them with relevant vocational and life skills (such as

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[77] See, for example, Tsjeard Bouta, Georg Frerks, and Ian Bannon, *Gender, Conflict and Development*, pp. 99-109, and Marc Sommers, "Creating Programs for Africa's Urban Youth: The Challenge of Marginalization," *Journal of International Cooperation in Education* (Vol. 10(1), 2007), pp. 28-29.
[78] Marc Sommers, *Youth and Conflict: A Brief Review of Available Literature*, p. 25.

HIV/AIDS awareness and parenting) module training to set the stage for stable success in small-scale entrepreneurial work. Relevant mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities, in addition, will also be sought for youth group members. When the youth groups are ready to start their enterprise, they will receive a small start-up grant (or a low interest loan). The amounts might be enough to help some youth start a small enterprise, such as, perhaps, a neighborhood small goods store. Additional grants can be obtained provided the group achieves predetermined benchmarks.

It is during this time that Youth Employment Trainers will be expected to regularly visit the youth group and their new enterprise to help them solve problems and, if necessary, provide them with additional relevant trainings. While the average duration of a trainer's engagement with one youth group will need to be determined during the pilot period, it is estimated to last approximately eight months, with regular site visits following this intensive start-up period.

A core feature of the programme model is a vigorous and integrated assessment, monitoring and evaluation component. The programme's Monitoring and Evaluation Team (MET) will regularly monitor the pilot programme and share recommend adjustments with the programme's supervisors. The MET will also employ and train urban youth as evaluation staff members. In addition, the MET will train youth group members in carrying out market and enterprise assessments. The primary purpose of this extensive evaluative work is to eventually develop an effective model for transforming poor, unemployed urban youth into reasonably successful entrepreneurs (a secondary purpose is to build youth capacities as evaluators).

Over time, it is anticipated that the pilot programme will be expanded and mainstreamed as a programme for reaching significant numbers of unemployed and marginalized male and female urban youth in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire.

Annex

About the author

Marc Sommers is an Associate Research Professor of Humanitarian Studies at the Fletcher School, Tufts University, and a Research Fellow at Boston University's African Studies Center. He also regularly works as an international consultant.

Dr. Sommers began researching the situation and perspectives of war-affected youth 18 years ago. Since that time, he has conducted research, assessment and evaluation work in 21 war-affected countries (including Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone). Dr. Sommers has presented widely and published extensively on youth, urbanization, child soldiers, education, peace education, conflict negotiation, forced migration, human rights, and coordination issues in humanitarian and post-war reconstruction contexts. He has consulted for policy institutes and numerous donor, United Nations, and non-governmental agencies, and has received research support from the Ford, Guggenheim, Mellon, and Rotary foundations.

Dr. Sommers is currently finalizing a book on youth in Rwanda and carrying out research for a book on the influence of popular culture and child soldiers in Sierra Leone. His first book, *Fear in Bongoland: Burundi Refugees in Urban Tanzania,* received the 2003 Margaret Mead Award.