



# Urban youth in Africa

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**ABSTRACT** It is widely assumed that most Africans reside in rural areas, that African cities make little economic sense and are unusually violent because so many unemployed young men live there, and that urban migrant youth can be drawn back to their former rural homes. This paper challenges all of these assumptions. In the process, it reviews dominant trends in Africa's rapid urban expansion and examines what life is like for urban youth. I will argue that African cities are underserved and fiercely competitive economic environments that are negatively impacted by neoliberal development policies. Urban youth life tends to take place in worlds that are largely separate from the rest of society. The pressures and dangers facing male and female youth can be extreme, yet at the same time African cities are exceptionally stimulating places that provide opportunities for re-invention for many urban youth. The paper ends with recommendations for addressing the needs of the marginalized majority of Africa's urban youth more effectively. Its primary focus is urban areas in the region of sub-Saharan Africa.

**KEYWORDS** Africa / conflict / employment / exclusion / gender / neoliberal / urban / youth

## I. INTRODUCTION

African cities have perplexed and dismayed many visitors and scholars. Simone claims that African cities "...don't work" and that for many urban residents "...life is reduced to a state of emergency."<sup>(1)</sup> Ritner, writing at the dawn of the independence era, stated that African cities "...work, but they work for decay instead of growth."<sup>(2)</sup> Hope contends that African cities make no sense in economic terms, as they are more urbanized than their level of economic development would justify.<sup>(3)</sup> El-Kenz sees these cities as "...cruel" and offering a "...disconcerting" anonymity.<sup>(4)</sup> Kaplan describes West African cities as "...high density concentrations of human beings who have been divested of certain stabilizing cultural models, with no strong governmental institutions or communities to compensate for the loss."<sup>(5)</sup>

Many observers comment in particular on urban youth. Kaplan describes the large numbers of out of school unemployed male youth as "...loose molecules in an unstable social fluid that threatened to ignite."<sup>(6)</sup> Shoumatoff writes of "...detrribalized young men, lost souls wandering in the vast space between the traditional and the modern worlds ... howling in the streets of downtown Nairobi in the middle of the night."<sup>(7)</sup> El-Kenz notes their

"...anger, a sense of hurt, and revolt..." and surmises that: "It is a small step from the culture of violence to its actual practice."<sup>(8)</sup>

Given these collective views, it is small wonder that many international agencies focus their attention on Africa's villages instead of its cities. Yet there is an irony in this broad institutional tendency: while investments flow largely into rural Africa, ever more of its residents are heading to the cities. Most of these urban migrants are youth, and they are the active agents of sub-Saharan Africa's radical transformation from a mainly rural to a predominantly urban region. African youth stand far ahead of nearly all government and non-government institutions in their urban orientation, and not just those living in cities and towns; in their clothes, their interests, their slang, many if not most village youth are leaning towards cities as well.

The authors cited above are linked by their limited interaction with the very urban youth about whom they are so concerned. Field research with African urban youth reveals that, while most urban youth in Africa are certainly poor and many are struggling, their lives are not characterized by enveloping disaster. Life in town is tough and sometimes threatening. But cities are hardly "black holes"; they also provide youth with opportunities, attractions and possible trajectories that are simply not available in rural areas. Through youth's eyes, the anonymity of city life is not a threat but a resource: cities are places where they can throw off (or at least delay) adulthood expectations and reinvent themselves. Surviving in cities is hardly easy, but if you "make it" there's a chance to assume a glow of success that may be forever out of reach in home villages.

Understanding why youth are in cities and how they strive to survive and hopefully succeed there is essential to engaging successfully with them and providing them with effective support. It is also critical to successful development in the region. Yet documentation on many vital dimensions of sub-Saharan African urban life is thin,<sup>(9)</sup> and the lack of data on urban youth in sub-Saharan Africa, and adolescents in particular, is still more serious despite the fact that approximately one in four Africans is between 10 and 19 years old.<sup>(10)</sup> The absence of data is compounded by some prevailing assumptions that hinder the ability to accurately grasp and appropriately respond to the rapid urbanization and youthful demographics of Africa. These assumptions are that:

- Africa is a rural-based continent;
- African cities make little economic sense;
- the dense concentrations of unemployed young men make African cities unusually violent places; and
- young urban migrants can be drawn back to their rural homes of origin.

This paper challenges these assumptions, at the same time describing some of the dominant trends and contours of Africa's urbanization and exploring what it's like to be a young person between the ages of 10 and 24 in a big African city.

## II. URBANIZATION AND URBAN TRENDS IN AFRICA

The urbanization of the world has been astoundingly rapid. In 1900, 13 per cent of all people lived in cities; by 1950, the proportion had increased

1. Simone, Abdou Maliq (2004a), *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, pages 1 and 4.

2. Ritner, Peter (1960), *The Death of Africa*, Macmillan, New York, page 18.

3. Hope Sr, Kempe Ronald (1998), "Urbanization and urban growth in Africa", *Journal of Asian and African Studies* Vol 33, No 4, pages 345-358, page 356.

4. El-Kenz, Ali (1996), "Youth and violence", in Stephen Ellis (editor), *Africa Now: People, Policies and Institutions*, James Currey, London, and Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, page 16.

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

6. See reference 5, page 16.

7. Shoumatoff, Alex (1988), *African Madness*, Alfred A Knopf, New York, page xiv.

8. See reference 4, pages 54 and 55.

9. Myers, Garth Andrew (2005), *Disposable Cities: Garbage, Governance and Sustainable Development in Urban Africa*, Ashgate, Burlington, VT, and Hampshire, UK, page 4.

10. Montgomery, Mark R, Richard Stren, Barney Cohen and Holly E Reed (editors) (2003), *Cities Transformed: Demographic Change and its Implications in the Developing World*, National Academies Press, Washington DC, page 247.

11. United Nations (2006), *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2005 Revision*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, New York, page 1.

12. Tostensen, Arne, Inge Tvedten and Mariken Vaa (2001), "The urban crisis, governance and associational life", in Arne Tostensen, Inge Tvedten and Mariken Vaa (editors), *Associational Life in African Cities: Popular Responses to the Urban Crisis*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet (Nordic Africa Institute), Uppsala, page 8.

13. Caraël, Michel and Judith R Glynn (2008), "HIV infection in young adults in Africa: context, risks and opportunities for prevention", in Michel Caraël and Judith R Glynn (editors), *HIV, Resurgent Infections and Population Change in Africa, International Studies in Population Vol 6*, Springer, New York, page 124.

14. See reference 9, page 4.

15. Peters, Krijn, Paul Richards and Koen Vlassenroot (2003), *What Happens to Youth During and After Wars? A Preliminary Review of Literature on Africa and Assessment on the Debate*, ROWOO, The Hague, October, accessible at <http://www.rawoo.nl/pdf/youthreport.pdf>; also Sommers, Marc (2003), *War, Urbanization and Africa's Youth at Risk: Understanding and Addressing Future Challenges*, Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity and Creative Associates International, Washington DC, accessible at <http://www.beps.net/publications/BEPS-UrbanizationWarYouthatRisk-.pdf>.

16. Human Rights Watch (2002), *Hidden in Plain View: Refugees Living Without Protection in Nairobi and Kampala*, Human Rights Watch, New York; also Sommers, Marc (2001a), "Young, male and Pentecostal: urban refugees in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol 14, No 4, pages 347–370.

17. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2007), *State of the World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth*, UNFPA, New York, page 16.

to 29 per cent; in 2005, nearly half of all humans lived in urban areas (49 per cent); and by 2030, it is estimated that 60 per cent of the world's population will reside in cities.<sup>(11)</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa, currently one of the least urbanized regions in the world, is urbanizing faster than any other.<sup>(12)</sup> Caraël and Glynn point out that "... urban populations of sub-Saharan Africa have increased by 600 per cent in the last 35 years: a growth rate which has no precedent in human history."<sup>(13)</sup> By 2030, 51 per cent of Africans will live in urban areas, and urbanization rates in East and Southern Africa have led the world for almost 50 years.<sup>(14)</sup> Conflict-affected countries have particularly strong urban growth rates<sup>(15)</sup> and increasing numbers of refugees are shifting from camps and settlements to cities – even though such movements are illegal.<sup>(16)</sup>

Most of the residents of Africa's burgeoning cities live in slums, lacking even rudimentary services. According to UNFPA:

"In sub-Saharan Africa, urbanization has become virtually synonymous with slum growth; 72 per cent of the region's urban population lives under slum conditions, compared to 56 per cent in South Asia. The slum population of sub-Saharan Africa almost doubled in 15 years, reaching nearly 200 million in 2005."<sup>(17)</sup>

Conditions can be dire. Packer, describing Lagos, Nigeria's largest city, communicates a strong sense of revulsion: "It's hard to decide..." he observes, "...if the extravagant ugliness of the cityscape is a sign of vigour or of disease – a life force or an impending apocalypse."<sup>(18)</sup> He concludes that "... the human misery of Lagos not only overwhelms one's senses and sympathy but also seems irreversible."<sup>(19)</sup>

Garth Myers takes a less visceral approach, arguing that African governments, encouraged by multilateral institutions and donor governments, have adopted neoliberal policies that have left a path of ruin for most Africans. In his survey of Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar in Tanzania, and Zambia's capital, Lusaka, he finds that poverty has become more widespread and that local governments have lost the capacity to meet their responsibilities.

Whether one views the difficulties at an on the ground, sensory level (like Packer, a journalist) or from the level of structure, policy and process (like Myers, an academic), the result for Africa's urban poor is pretty much the same. Municipal governments may be weak, overrun and even hapless for any number of reasons, and generally depend heavily on some combination of donor and NGO ideas, monies and private sector partnerships. Their coordination of such efforts ranges between loose and non-existent. Public sector provision for basic necessities is, in general, minimal and likely favour the wealthy. As Lubuva (a Tanzanian government official) notes: "Urban local authorities have very little revenue of their own, far less than what they would require to keep pace with the rate of urbanization."<sup>(20)</sup> Private sector economies are too often tiny, wracked by corruption and nepotism, and provide economic opportunities merely for the fortunate few. As a result, informality "...has become a vital facet of African urban life in the sense that it is predominantly driven by informal practices in such areas as work, housing, land use, transportation and a variety of social services."<sup>(21)</sup>

The situation, at least for some cities, is becoming significantly worse. One study of domestic water use in East African cities, for example, indicates a decline of as much as 72 per cent in the per capita

rate of daily water use over a recent three-decade period (1967–1997).<sup>(22)</sup> Sanitation in urban slums in East and Southern Africa is “deplorable” and water-related diseases such as scabies, dysentery and cholera are commonplace.<sup>(23)</sup>

Bryceson asserts that: “*The common assumption that urban dwellers enjoy better health than rural dwellers does not apply to the urban poor.*”<sup>(24)</sup> Even direr than the water-related public health threats is the scourge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. East and Southern Africa stand at the centre of the pandemic, with urban prevalence rates about double those in rural areas and higher than anywhere else in the world. The threat applies not only to urban youth, who are the primary victims of AIDS, but also to those who depend on them, such as elder relatives in cities.<sup>(25)</sup>

As with just about every service in urban Africa, access to urban education is unequal and often exclusive. When compared to their counterparts in rural areas, youth in cities are generally more successful in this regard (although not in Kenya).<sup>(26)</sup> But in this area, as in others, the differences between the rich and the poor in African cities are growing, and acquiring an education in cities tends to be much more available to the minority of families with sufficient funds to obtain it.<sup>(27)</sup>

The difficulties in Africa’s cities are compounded by the high degree of competition that is fuelled by on-going urban population growth: setting up shop on a busy street corner to sell cold water or sunglasses may be hotly contested, and what looks like a concrete slab to one person may be a bed to another.

Bryceson is among a sizeable group of urban Africa scholars who find that neoliberal economic policies and the expansion of direct foreign investment have exacerbated economic inequalities in cities. They take a dark view of the prospects for urban Africa, predicting a threatening future. As Katumanga notes: “*What is striking is the assumption that a shrunken state can play midwife to the birth of a productive African entrepreneurial class.*”<sup>(28)</sup> Katumanga doubts that it can.

Other observers take a more positive view, highlighting the exceptional creativity that urban residents use to survive (all too frequently, to be sure, out of necessity) as an inspiring indication of a “new” kind of Africa emerging in urban neighbourhoods. While African cities may be in decline, they nonetheless assert that “...*the majority of residents of disadvantaged African neighbourhoods have not passively watched conditions deteriorate.*”<sup>(29)</sup>

### III. AFRICA’S URBAN YOUTH

#### a. Demographics

As noted above, youth (and male youth in particular) are at the forefront of Africa’s advance towards cities. This should hardly be surprising, as today’s global population is the youngest in history. In rough terms, half the people in the world (about 3.3 billion) are under 25, with 1.5 billion aged between 12 and 24. Fertility rates are now declining across most of the globe, and a youth cohort this large is unlikely to be seen again.<sup>(30)</sup> Of this extraordinary number of young people, 86 per cent live in low- and middle-income countries,<sup>(31)</sup> an unprecedented situation for those addressing development issues.

18. Packer, George (2006), “The megacity: decoding the chaos of Lagos”, *The New Yorker* Vol 82, No 37, November 13, page 5, accessible at [http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/11/13/061113fa\\_fact\\_packer?printable=true](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/11/13/061113fa_fact_packer?printable=true).

19. See reference 18, page 11.

20. Lubuva, John M (2004), *Community Approach to Security, Social Inclusion and Development in Tanzania*, Paper presented at the Dialogue on Promoting Co-existence and Security in the Information Society, Barcelona, 9–11 September 2004 (unpublished paper), page 4.

21. Konings, Piet, Rijk van Dijk and Dick Foeken (2006), “The African neighbourhood: an introduction”, in Piet Konings and Dick Foeken (editors), *Crisis and Creativity: Exploring the Wealth of the African Neighbourhood*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, page 3.

22. Thompson, John, Ina T Porras, Elisabeth Wood, James K Tumwine, Mark R Mujwahuzi, Munguti Katui-Katua and Nick Johnstone (2000), “Waiting at the tap: changes in urban water use in East Africa over three decades”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 12, No 2, October, pages 37–52, pages 40 and 42.

23. Bryceson, Deborah Fahy (2006), “Fragile cities: fundamentals of urban life in East and Southern Africa”, in Deborah Fahy Bryceson and Deborah Potts (editors), *African Urban Economies: Viability, Vitality or Vitiation?*, Palgrave MacMillan, Hampshire, UK, and New York, page 24.

24. See reference 23, page 25.

25. Kamwengo, Martin M (2007), “Gendered generational support systems among elderly urbanites in Zambia”, in Matšelis, M Mapetla, Ann Schlyter and Basia D Bless (editors), *Urban Experiences of Gender, Generations and Social Justice*, Institute of Southern African Studies, National University of Lesotho, page 112.

26. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2007), *World Youth Report 2007: Young People’s Transition to Adulthood: Progress and*

Challenges, United Nations, New York, page 91.

27. See reference 23.

28. Katumanga, Musambayi (2005), "A city under siege: banditry and modes of accumulation in Nairobi, 1991–2004", *Review of African Political Economy* Vol 32, No 106, pages 505–520, page 507.

29. See reference 21, page 3.

30. Barker, Gary (2005), *Dying to Be Men: Youth, Masculinity and Social Exclusion*, Routledge, London, 186 pages.

31. World Bank (2006), *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation*, World Bank, Washington DC, page 4.

32. Leahy, Elizabeth, Robert Engelman, Carloyn Gibb Vogel, Sarah Haddock and Todd Preston (2007), *The Shape of Things to Come: Why Age Structure Matters to a Safer, More Equitable World*, Population Action International, Washington DC.

33. Ogbu, Ostia and Gerrishon Ikiara (1995), "The crisis of urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa", *Courier* Jan–Feb, pages 52–59; also see reference 15, Sommers (2003).

34. Sawers, Larry (1989), "Urban primacy in Tanzania", *Economic Development and Cultural Change* Vol 37, No 4, pages 841–859, pages 854–855.

35. Jacobsen, Karen, Sue Lautze and Abdal Monim Kheider Osman (2001), "The Sudan: unique challenges of displacement in Khartoum", in Marc Vincent and Birgitte Refslund Sorensen (editors), *Caught Between Borders: Response Strategies of the Internally Displaced*, Pluto Press, London, and Norwegian Refugee Council.

36. Hendrixson, Anne (2004), *Angry Young Men, Veiled Young Women: Constructing a New Population Threat*, Corner House Briefing 34, December, accessible at <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/pdf/briefing/34veiled.pdf>, page 2.

37. USAID (2005), *Youth and Conflict: A Toolkit for Intervention*, Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, United States Agency for

Sub-Saharan Africa's youth population has attracted particular attention from demographers because the absolute number of young people is growing faster there than anywhere else. Sub-Saharan Africa's population has quadrupled since 1950 and, unlike all other world regions, the expansion of sub-Saharan Africa's youth population will not peak for another 20 years. Out of 46 countries and territories where at least 70 per cent of the population is under the age of 30, only seven are not in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>(32)</sup>

Young Africans emptying villages and funnelling into cities have never paid much attention to the contention that African cities are built on an economic house of cards. To cities they go, and once there, few will ever return to live in their former rural homes, as has been demonstrated repeatedly in Africa's urban history.<sup>(33)</sup> Governments have periodically engineered returns of (mostly male) urban youth to the countryside, and they have proven fruitless. Perhaps the most famous of these was the "Nguvu Kazi" ("Hard Work") campaign in 1983 in Tanzania, which aimed to "repatriate" apparently jobless urbanites (many of whom actually worked in the informal economy) to their rural homes. It proved to be an expensive, embarrassing flop. Once dropped in a rural area, youth simply hopped on a bus or train and returned straight to the capital.<sup>(34)</sup> Probably the most dramatic evidence of the determination of African urban youth to remain in cities is the case of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Khartoum, Sudan. Despite intimidation, including the extensive bulldozing of IDP homes by the Sudanese government, a survey of IDPs found that young people saw themselves as urban and had no desire to leave Khartoum.<sup>(35)</sup>

While working for the US government's Central Intelligence Agency in 1985, a demographer named Gary Fuller coined the term "youth bulge",<sup>(36)</sup> which has had a lengthy shelf life. The term describes a particular demographic phenomenon, namely the large number of youth relative to the adult population, but it also conjures up a sense of instability and has come to be associated with threat and danger. A "bulge", after all, may burst.

## b. Youth and conflict

The high presence of youth in the urban population has created considerable agitation among some analysts. The concern is reflected in the development community, including the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which noted a few years ago that: "*Urbanization concentrates precisely that demographic group most inclined to violence: unattached young males who have left their families behind and have come to the city seeking economic opportunities.*"<sup>(37)</sup>

A number of publications have highlighted the statistical correlation between nations with youth bulge demographics and the incidence of political instability or civil conflict.<sup>(38)</sup> In statistical terms, this correlation certainly exists. Urdal notes that it is "...*extremely robust.*"<sup>(39)</sup> But it also invites serious distortions. Most nations with youth bulge populations have not in fact had recent civil conflicts; and when civil conflicts do occur in countries with youth bulges, the great majority of young men never get involved in violence.<sup>(40)</sup>

There is no question that large concentrations of unemployed or underemployed people may contribute to instability at some point.

Yet what is so striking about most African cities is that they are not far more difficult, threatening and unstable. Nor does the “youth bulge and instability thesis” take into account other factors related to instability. Some scholars, for instance, argue for a connection between city size and crime rates;<sup>(41)</sup> others for a relationship between a gradual process toward democracy and the risk of conflict.<sup>(42)</sup> The fact that virtually all recent civil wars in Africa have their origins in rural areas also calls into question the alleged connection between large numbers of unemployed urban youth in Africa and conflict.<sup>(43)</sup>

The concept of the youth bulge is useful when it attracts attention to nations with unusually large numbers of youth who require support. But highlighting the youth bulge and instability thesis is counter-productive when it incorrectly colours most youth as dangerous and inspires unproven assertions about how young people think and act. It is also important to remember that the youth bulge literature contains little data featuring the views of youth themselves.<sup>(44)</sup>

### c. Youth employment

The lives of many urban youth are dominated either by work or the need to find work. Accurate youth unemployment rates in Africa are remarkably difficult to establish and the reported range is phenomenal. For instance, Liberia’s reported rate is 88 per cent,<sup>(45)</sup> while Burundi’s has been estimated at one per cent.<sup>(46)</sup> That two of the world’s poorest and youngest nations, each with significant urban growth rates, could have such divergent rates for youth unemployment is difficult to believe.

There are several related reasons for these reported differences. Accurate, reliable data on employment can be extraordinarily difficult to gather, particularly in impoverished post-war nations such as Burundi and Liberia. There is also little agreement among countries as to what constitutes “work” or “no work”. The employment–unemployment dichotomy also fails to include a far more significant marker of economic activity for youth and most other urban dwellers, namely underemployment, the kind of work that is commonplace in big African cities but that is difficult to quantify because it may be short-lived and irregular. And finally, the livelihoods of many urban dwellers are, in many if not most cases, technically illegal. Accordingly, economic life is frequently shielded from official view; what residents of Dar es Salaam might call *mambo ya kujificha* (the affairs of hiding oneself).

The overwhelming majority of economic activity in urban Africa is in the informal sector – also called the black market, the hidden sector, the underground, fraudulent, peripheral, shadow and creeping economy,<sup>(47)</sup> terms suggesting that it is not the context for honourable economic activity. Yet in Africa, two in three urban residents obtain their livelihoods from the informal economic sector, which is thought to be growing at an annual rate of 7 per cent. In the near future, it is estimated that more than 90 per cent of jobs will be part of informal economies.<sup>(48)</sup> A failure to recognize the vitality and necessity of informal markets constitutes a denial of fundamental economic realities. Formal sector growth rates in developing countries (perhaps 2–3 per cent) cannot keep up with urban growth rates (which are often around 4–5 per cent).<sup>(49)</sup>

International Development (USAID), Washington DC, page 7.

38. See reference 32, page 22.

39. Urdal, Henrik (2004), *The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950–2000*, World Bank Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Paper No 14, Washington DC, page 16.

40. Barker, Gary and Christine Ricardo (2006), “Young men and the construction of masculinity in sub-Saharan Africa: implications for HIV/AIDS, conflict and violence”, in Ian Bannon and Maria C Correia (editors), *The Other Half of Gender: Men’s Issues in Development*, World Bank, Washington DC, page 181.

41. See reference 10.

42. See reference 39.

43. Sommers, Marc (2007a), “Embracing the margins: working with youth amid war and insecurity”, in Lael Brainard and Derek Chollet (editors), *Too Poor for Peace? Global Poverty, Conflict and Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 175 pages.

44. Among the most documented and cited recent studies promoting the youth bulge and instability thesis is Cincotta, Richard P, Robert Engelman and Daniele Anastasion (2003), *The Security Demographic: Population and Civil Conflict after the Cold War*, Population Action International, Washington DC. Critical assessments of the thesis are available elsewhere, see reference 36; also Sommers, Marc (2006a), *Fearing Africa’s Young Men: The Case of Rwanda*, Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit Working Paper No 32, World Bank, Washington DC, accessible at <http://www.eldis.org/static/DOC21389.htm>; and Sommers, Marc (2007c), *West Africa’s Youth Employment Challenge: The Case of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire*, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna, accessible at <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/faculty/sommers/Sommers-2007.pdf>.

45. Government of Liberia (2004), *Millennium Development Goals Report 2004*, Government of Liberia, Monrovia, page 7.
46. Leibbrandt, Murray and Cecil Mlatsheni (2004), *Youth in sub-Saharan Labour Markets*, Macro-Micro Linkage Forum Paper, African Development and Poverty Reduction, Somerset West, South Africa, page 38, accessible at [http://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/Research\\_Units/DPRU/DPRU-Conference2004/Papers/Youth\\_in\\_SSA\\_CecilMlatsheni.pdf](http://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/Research_Units/DPRU/DPRU-Conference2004/Papers/Youth_in_SSA_CecilMlatsheni.pdf).
47. Tripp, Aili Mari (1997), *Changing the Rules: The Politics of Liberalization and the Urban Informal Economy in Tanzania*, University of California Press, Los Angeles and London, page 18; also Karl, Kenneth (2000), "The informal sector", *The Courier* Vol 178, pages 53–54. Karl's remarkable list totals 30 terms for the informal economy.
48. See reference 47, Karl (2000), page 53.
49. See reference 47, Karl (2000).
50. World Bank (2007), *Improving Opportunities for Sustainable Youth Employment in Sierra Leone*, Report No XXX-SL, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Unit, West Africa, World Bank, Washington DC, page xiv.
51. de Barros, Manuel Correia (2005), "Profiling youth involved in the informal markets of Luanda", in Keith Muloongo, Roger Kibasomba and Jemima Njeri Kariri (editors), *The Many Faces of Human Security: Case Studies of Seven Countries in Southern Africa*, Institute of Security Studies, Pretoria, page 212.
52. Sommers, Marc (2001b), *Fear in Bongoland: Burundi Refugees in Urban Tanzania*, Studies in Forced Migration Series Vol 8, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, page 78.
53. See reference 9, pages 42–43.

A striking characteristic of African urban life on the streets, in shops, markets and neighbourhoods, is how often the subject of moneymaking comes up. How a certain person or enterprise is getting ahead, where prices for commodities are high or low, when new shipments of materials are arriving at the docks, where and why police are sweeping through particular neighbourhoods or markets – these are examples of the subjects that youth and others in African cities discuss. This is not idle chat – it is crucial information in a changing and extremely competitive economic environment.

Finding formal sector work can be particularly difficult for urban youth, as there are few jobs and many youth lack the qualifications that formal sector work often requires. A Sierra Leone study, for example, found that a mere nine per cent of the working population had formal sector jobs and that opportunities were significantly lower for youth.<sup>(50)</sup> Many youth in urban Africa, male and female, are engaged in work that often provides only some "small-small" money, or perhaps a bartered item, in return. This sort of work is frequently irregular and is usually entrepreneurial. A study in Luanda, Angola, found the average age of those working in the city's outdoor market areas was 21, and that both male and female youth averaged just over five years of education. The young women had significantly fewer options than male youth and earned less.<sup>(51)</sup> African formal sector economies, in short, are generally far too small to absorb large numbers of out-of-school urban youth. What work they find is likely to be temporary and holding onto it may be impossible.

Dar es Salaam is a good case in point. Known to rural youth as a place of extravagant wealth, its lure is confirmed by returnees, who come with money in their pockets and gifts for their relatives.<sup>(52)</sup> A young man who has "made it" in Dar es Salaam can return home to marry a village girl – before returning to Tanzania's largest city. But from work to housing to marketing, most people's lives take place within the unregulated (and technically illegal) informal sector of the city's mushrooming economy.<sup>(53)</sup> Dar es Salaam is known to youth across Tanzania as "Bongoland", an illuminating nickname, since "bongo" is slang for "brains". It requires cunning and smarts to make it in Dar es Salaam. Many don't because competition is so fierce.

## d. Modernity and tradition

However young people arrive on a city street corner or neighbourhood, it is likely that both insecurity and stimulation mark their lives to a significant degree. The swirl of "new" and "modern" trends, fashions, ideas and technologies that hit cities first have a magnetic attraction. As soon as stylish new t-shirts, slang phrases, shoes, songs, arm movements, gadgets and the like hit the streets, many if not most urban youth are eager to master and/or own them. Rural youth, not wanting to be viewed as "backward" or "bushy", greedily grasp at incoming trends as well.

The African dichotomy between the urban and the rural, the cutting edge and the all-too-familiar, is described by Utas, speaking about Liberian culture:

"To most Liberians, modernity is what comes from overseas and predominantly takes the form of commodities (technology, clothes,

etc.), communications, the western form of education and world religions such as Christianity and, to some extent, Islam. Modernity comes in the guise of consumption... Tradition on the other hand is what is locally produced, whether it comes in the form of commodities or of ideas. Traditions also occupy a space largely dominated by elders, thus youth, contesting the powers of elders are prone to seek status in the modernities."<sup>(54)</sup>

This is no small distinction. The heartland of modernity in Africa is the urban world. When young people leave rural Africa, to a significant degree they leave African traditions behind as well. Yet they are still tied to the traditions of their upbringing. The traditional gender roles, for example, are frequently dominant and can create trajectories and dangers for both male and female youth.

Mugisha et al. describe these gender archetypes: "*Boys are conditioned for the outside world, while girls are conditioned for the domestic world.*"<sup>(55)</sup> There is immediate evidence of this separation on most African city streets: while women and female youth can certainly be seen, men and male youth tend to dominate the public world. Their under-representation in public spheres of city life may help explain why female youth are so often overlooked. But beyond "out of sight, out of mind" tendencies, there are other influential gender roles that significantly affect male and female urban youth. Mugisha et al. note that: "*Women are taught from childhood how to be submissive, while men are taught how to exercise authority.*"<sup>(56)</sup> Yet in urban settlement life, they point out, "*...no systems have been developed to help boys and girls fulfill the constructs that society has placed upon them.*"<sup>(57)</sup> This sets the stage for significant difficulties.

### e. Exclusion and belonging

Some urban youth become deeply involved with religious institutions, a reality too frequently overlooked by those seeking to engage with them. Religion may be a pathway towards success in the city. Belonging to a community of believers can provide structure, support and a wealth of resources and activities, possibly even help in finding housing or a job. Pentecostal churches are often unusually effective in attracting urban youth to their communities.<sup>(58)</sup>

The moral world of Pentecostalism and other religious institutions, Islamic and Christian, can accentuate one of the distinctions that separate those urban youth who belong, in some way, to mainstream society and those who do not. The division is sometimes seen as between the "good" and the "bad". Urban youth who reject mainstream tradition and religion are common targets of castigation. The situation is informed by a powerful irony: urban youth are a demographic majority that sees itself as an excluded minority. Being out of school and unemployed or in and out of work invites perceptions of young people as derelicts, thieves and prostitutes. Such titles are markers of exclusion and generators of profound social distance.<sup>(59)</sup>

The sheer numbers of urban youth living on the margins of society can mean that the urban "mainstream" is strikingly small in terms of the overall population of cities. The civil society dominated by educated elites may have, at best, tenuous connections to the out of school, marginalized and under-represented urban youth majority, with devastating results for

54. Utas, Mats (2003), "Sweet battlefields: youth and the Liberian civil war", *Dissertations in Cultural Anthropology*, Uppsala University, Sweden, page 44.

55. Mugisha, Frederick, Jacqueline Arinaitwe-Mugisha and Billah O N Hagembe (2003), "Alcohol, substance and drug use among urban slum adolescents in Nairobi, Kenya", *Cities* Vol 20, No 4, pages 231-240, page 238.

56. Mugisha and colleagues point out, however, that times of crisis can reveal a different picture, as women pull together to find solutions while men, faced with situations that undermine their authority, are more likely to fall apart or withdraw into the escapism of alcohol or drugs; see reference 55, page 238.

57. See reference 55, page 238.

58. Hansen, Karen Tranberg (2008), "Localities and sites of youth agency in Lusaka", in Karen Tranberg Hansen (editor), *Youth and the City in the Global South*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis; also see reference 52.

59. Tensions between views of African youth as threats and underlying youth realities have been elaborated by the author elsewhere; see reference 44, Sommers (2006a); also see reference 43.



youth access to services, jobs and acceptance. But youth can also claim new turf and identities for themselves in the emerging context of city life. When they enter the city, the anonymity provides the opportunity for many to reinvent themselves, sometimes repeatedly.

Male youth in particular partake of the possibilities. One way is to join a football club, which can be serious business, providing members, as Baller found in peri-urban Dakar, with a chance to "...see themselves not at the 'end of the world'... but at its centre, re-imagining the urban landscape and taking possession of symbols of power and success."<sup>(60)</sup>

Nicknames are an important part of identity re-invention. In Dar es Salaam in the 1990s, popular youth nicknames included "Eddy Muffy" (after the American comedian and actor, Eddie Murphy) and "Maiko" (after the American pop star, Michael Jackson).<sup>(61)</sup> Nicknames can change as namesakes lose popularity or when a youth chooses a different identity.

Another important vehicle of belonging is contemporary music, which speaks to the frustration of urban youth and to their sense of being misunderstood and viewed as deviant, when they are merely struggling to find a way to succeed. This is frequently tied to a sense of the hypocrisy that exists among the powers that be. Moyer finds that Dar es Salaam youth, for instance, quote the lyrics of Bob Marley, the late reggae musician, "...as a means of commenting on local social and economic injustices, which they attribute to poor governance and hypocrisy."<sup>(62)</sup> Youth all over the world, including in Africa, have been powerfully drawn to hip-hop culture/rap music, which expresses what it's like to be young and searching for respect and acceptance on new terms. Most African rappers seek a broader audience by avoiding the use of curse words, which are commonplace in American rap songs. Speaking of rappers in Dakar, Niang concludes that they "...do not represent a minority voice but belong to the category of local youth whose major unifying features are urban poverty and the daily inequalities they endure."<sup>(63)</sup> Commenting on rappers in Tanzania, Perrullo observes that they seek to alter "...popular conceptions of [youth] as hooligans and [allow] youth to become knowledge holders and educators within urban contexts."<sup>(64)</sup>

One of the most common – and most commonly overlooked – forms of civil society in African cities are male youth social groups. It is not unusual in city neighbourhoods to see small signs scrawled on a wall, words such as "Action Boys" or "Sunglass Boys". A wooden bench on the sidewalk beneath the sign may be the meeting place for members of a local youth group. At the end of a difficult day of searching for work or some action, joining peers to discuss economic, social and political events at dusk is an important way for male youth to create community and belonging in huge African cities. Ya'u, describing this sort of gathering in Kano, Nigeria, asserts that such typical adolescent "gangs" or *yandaba* provide male youth with an identity. They can be involved in such social services as neighbourhood protection, or may start sport clubs. Membership tends to be inclusive, peer oriented and non-hierarchical, a "...means of socialization and a sort of a passing rite into adulthood." Not least, they are "...a strictly male affair."<sup>(65)</sup>

## f. Neoliberal policies and the moral worlds of cities

Ya'u argues that a profound shift took place in the organization and function of the adolescence banding, or gangs, following the introduction

60. Baller, Susann (2002), *Playing Football in a Post-colonial City: The Nawetaan Championship in Pikine (Senegal)*, Humboldt University, Berlin, [www.vad-ev.de/2004/download/01tagung/018papers2002/baller.pdf](http://www.vad-ev.de/2004/download/01tagung/018papers2002/baller.pdf), page 8.

61. See reference 52.

62. Moyer, Eileen (2005), "Street corner justice in the name of Jah: imperatives for peace among Dar es Salaam street youth", *Africa Today* Vol 51, No 3, pages 31–58, page 36.

63. Niang, Abdoulaye (2006), "Bboys: hip-hop culture in Dakar, Senegal", in Pam Nilan and Carles Feixa (editors), *Global Youth? Hybrid Identities, Plural Worlds*, Routledge, London and New York, page 182.

64. Perrullo, Alex (2005), "Hooligans and heroes: youth identity and hip-hop in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania", *Africa Today* Vol 51, No 4, pages 75–101, page 77.

65. Ya'u, Yunusa Zakari (2000), "The youth, economic crisis and identity transformation: the case of the *yandaba* in Kano", in Attahiru Jega (editor), *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, and

of a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in Nigeria in 1986. The pressure on governments to shift from public to private service provision led, among other things, to a dramatic decline in government subsidies for crucial food items on which the urban poor depended. The impacts were immediate and immense, as food scarcities increased and public sector jobs decreased. Myers argues that the economic emphasis on privatization spilled over into culture and consciousness, resulting in "...a more individuated and fractured sense of self and a commodification of many aspects of everyday life"; a moral justification "...to be selfish, if only just to get by."<sup>(66)</sup>

The fallout from fairly drastic SAP policies (together with other causes, such as government corruption) on urban residents and their communities in many African countries has invited new interpretations of morality. Ya'u describes what happened in Kano, Nigeria: "*With the collapse of social services and [the] inability of young people to secure any other legitimate means of livelihood...*" he notes, "...they are left in the street to fend for themselves by whatever means."<sup>(67)</sup> The impact on adolescent groups was profound. Rather than serving as a means for male adolescents and youth to gather socially, contribute to community life and help them pass into adulthood, the *yandaba* became "...organizational platform[s] through which they could secure their livelihood, even if criminally."<sup>(68)</sup> In times of severe economic stress, some youth joined because of the promise of regular meals, others (girls and boys) to secure a place to sleep. What supported *yandaba* members in the aftermath of SAP was crime, and sometimes, violent crime.

A more general outcome has been a grey area between what may be seen as morally correct and what is required to survive in town. Selling drugs to policemen, for example, may become a "good job" because it is a regular business and protects the seller from arrests or confiscations by the police in the future.<sup>(69)</sup> The moral ambiguity extends to government officials; a Pentecostal church pastor in Dar es Salaam explains that: "*People must take bribes here, since the salaries are too low to live on.*" In such circumstances, "...in no sense is it bad... to take a bribe."<sup>(70)</sup>

Katumanga describes the involvement of some government and political elements in Nairobi, through political patronage, in the promotion of deviance and crime in the aftermath of structural adjustment. In contrast to pervasive views that a rise in crime is the result of a deviant sub-culture inhabited largely by unemployed male youth, Katumanga argues that in 1990s Kenya, deviance "...was state encouraged for politico-economic ends."<sup>(71)</sup> While Katumanga doesn't deny the presence of angry unemployed youth, he notes that many were goaded by a government with devious aspirations. One is again forced to consider whether the strong majority of poor urban (male) youth are dangerous, as so often assumed, or whether there is a tendency to scapegoat them for urban ills.

### g. Manhood pressures on male youth

Traditional understandings of manhood in Africa are associated with having a house, being married and having children. Cities can be places where male youth escape manhood pressures, but they also serve as a proving ground. In Tanzania, a male youth might be accepted as a man in his home village if he can return with sufficient money to marry and

Centre for Research and Documentation, Kano, page 164.

66. See reference 9, pages 6–7. Interestingly, while the invented Kiswahili word for privatization is *ubinafsishaji*, the literal translation of the term is "the causing of individualism or selfishness".

67. See reference 65, page 172.

68. See reference 65, page 172.

69. Private interview in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

70. See reference 52, page 176.

71. See reference 28, page 510.

72. See reference 52.

73. Utas, Mats (2005), "Building a future? The reintegration and remarginalization of youth in Liberia", in Paul Richards (editor), *No Peace No War: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, Ohio University Press, Athens, and James Currey, Oxford, page 150.

74. Momoh, Abubakar (1999), *The Youth Crisis in Nigeria: Understanding the Phenomenon of the Area Boys and Girls*, unpublished paper presented at the Conference on Children and Youth as Emerging Categories in Africa, Leuven, 4–6 November, cited by Utas (2005), see reference 73, page 150.

75. See reference 13, page 128.

76. Moyer, Eileen (2006), "Not quite comforts of home: searching for locality among street youth in Dar es Salaam", in Piet Konings and Dick Foeken (editors), *Crisis and Creativity: Exploring the Wealth of the African Neighbourhood*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, page 185.

77. See reference 76, page 186.

build a house.<sup>(72)</sup> Achieving this can be exceedingly difficult, as noted above, and some may never achieve it. Utas describes the pressures and difficulties that male youth faced in town in the aftermath of economic crisis in the 1980s:

"...many young men lost even the possibility to establish themselves as adults, by building a house or getting married – though they continued to become fathers, of children for whom they could not provide."<sup>(73)</sup>

Chronologically, the men "...outgrew youth but socially they became 'youthmen'."<sup>(74)</sup> Being unable to gain the urban foothold sufficient to becoming socially accepted as a man is a much deeper form of marginalization than arises merely from being unable to complete one's schooling or become a wage earner in town. Becoming a "youthman" is a permanent social punishment.

### h. Pressures on female youth

The situation facing urban female youth is no less serious, and on a day to day basis can be far worse. They tend to have significantly fewer economic options than their male youth counterparts, and when other options fail, prostitution may be the only means of survival – a perilous, if seemingly unavoidable, path.<sup>(75)</sup> The path does not necessarily include regular work as a prostitute. As Moyer describes the situation in Dar es Salaam, transactional sex may be an occasional necessity. Some of these young women may also have boyfriends, although the boys may be unusually poor themselves: "Young men with minimal resources were considered more likely to accept that their girlfriends also slept with other men for money because they knew they could not afford to support a woman on their own."<sup>(76)</sup> Significantly, many of the young women that Moyer interviewed wanted to:

"...become pregnant by their boyfriends in the hope that this would cement the bonds between them. They saw pregnancy as one of the only ways to escape the stigma that marked their lives... many men reported they were more likely to marry a woman after she had a child by him and proved that she was fertile..."<sup>(77)</sup>

The desire to get married (even unofficially) results not only in "boyfriends", transactional sex and prostitution. It also means a dramatically heightened vulnerability to infection from sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/AIDS. HIV prevalence rates among young urban Africans are now higher for females than for males.

### i. Adolescent experiences: the case of Kibera, Nairobi

One study of urban life in Africa provides a lens for understanding the lives of adolescents, who are overlooked in most youth studies. In this case, the target group was between the ages of 10 and 19 and all lived in the slums of Kibera, Nairobi. Half of this sample of adolescents had migrated to Kibera from other parts of the country, suggesting that urban migrants in African cities include a great many young children. Many

leave school early, migrants in particular. The girls in the sample were significantly less likely to be attending school: 43 per cent, as compared to 29 per cent of boys, were not in school. One-quarter of the boys and 14 per cent of girls were working for pay. The threat of sexual violence for female adolescent youth was high and the fear of being raped appeared to be alarmingly high among girls in the same sample. Boys were twice as likely as girls to have a public place for meeting friends of the same sex. Sixteen per cent of the surveyed girls were married and 16 per cent were mothers.<sup>(78)</sup> The trends that apply to urban youth lives in Africa, in short, appear to apply equally to their younger counterparts.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: ENGAGING WITH AFRICA'S URBAN YOUTH

It is hardly a broadside to state that most international assistance has proven ineffective. Easterly, for example, notes that the estimated US\$ 2.3 trillion that Western nations have invested in foreign aid over the last half century has failed to significantly reduce, much less end, poverty in the developing world.<sup>(79)</sup> Referring to the generally disappointing performance of Western government aid agencies, Collier states that: "No aspect of domestic policy is run this badly."<sup>(80)</sup> A study on post-war reconstruction in Burundi found that international assistance was unintentionally reconstructing inequalities that were a cause of civil war.<sup>(81)</sup> Uvin not only found the Mutara project in pre-civil war and pre-genocide Rwanda to be, for the most part, "...a complete failure", the project also supported forces of exclusion that helped lead, ultimately and unintentionally, to genocide.<sup>(82)</sup>

Perhaps one reason why foreign assistance so frequently comes up short is that the primary foreign aid agency constituencies are not poor people overseas but politicians and other citizens in the home country. Collier, for example, contends that: "The key obstacle to reforming aid is [domestic] public opinion."<sup>(83)</sup> This is illustrated by the following explanation from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) about its foreign aid expenditures: "Close to 80 per cent of USAID's grants and contracts go directly to American firms and non-governmental organizations."<sup>(84)</sup>

If international assistance generally creates underwhelming results, then the challenges of developing effective policies and programmes for urban youth in impoverished sub-Saharan Africa are especially daunting. But it can be done, and doing it is imperative given the region's rate of urban growth and the continuing expansion of its burgeoning youth population.

Before turning to recommendations for next steps, some brief concluding remarks are required. Africa will remain a rural-based continent only until 2030. African cities, which are already underserved and fiercely competitive economic environments, are negatively impacted by neoliberal approaches to African development. Despite such challenges, rural investments by international agencies are unlikely to persuade most urban migrant youth to return to their original homes. African youth migrate to cities and then stay there, because cities are stimulating, full of bounty and possibility, and provide opportunities for personal reinvention and a shift towards modernity. Yet urban areas are also sites of a new and alarming form of youth marginalization and exclusion, namely

78. Erulkar, Annabel S and James K Matheka (2007), *Adolescence in the Kibera Slums of Nairobi, Kenya*, Population Council, Nairobi and New York, page 9.

79. Easterly, William (2006), *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done so Much Ill and so Little Good*, Penguin Books, New York, 448 pages.

80. Collier, Paul (2007), *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 224 pages, page 184.

81. Sommers, Marc (2005), "It always rains in the same place first. Geographic favouritism in rural Burundi", Issue Briefing No 1, African Programme, Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington DC, accessible at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/IB001.pdf>.

82. Uvin, Peter (1998), *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford, CT, pages 119 and 121.

83. See reference 80, page 183.

84. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2007), "Why foreign aid?", accessible at [http://www.chapman.edu/wilkinson/socsci/sociology/Faculty/Babbie/e211/BiblioFiles/USAID\\_1998.htm](http://www.chapman.edu/wilkinson/socsci/sociology/Faculty/Babbie/e211/BiblioFiles/USAID_1998.htm).

the inability of many to gain social acceptance as adults. Youth frustration, alienation and defiance and sometimes despair and fatalism appear to be commonplace. Overlooking, misinterpreting or underestimating key urban youth trends is a mistake.

Working with civil society in African cities also requires a new approach. Marginalized urban male youth are part of a civil society that is distinctly separate from the mainstream, and marginalized female youth are alarmingly under-represented in nearly all forms of civil society. Accessing youth views and needs through mainstream civil society invites serious distortions, because elite youth leaders are unlikely to represent the views and needs of the non-elite, under-educated youth majority.

The following are broad, framing recommendations for engaging with and effectively supporting members of the marginalized majority of sub-Saharan Africa's urban youth.<sup>(85)</sup>

- **There is a need for vigorous policy reform.** Programmes alone cannot possibly address the needs of most urban youth due to their huge demographic numbers. It is thus critical that urban policies focus on stated youth concerns. National and international agencies should advocate for reforming government policies that are particularly dysfunctional, such as strict limits on informal economies and restrictions on access to land and housing that, collectively, can stymie youth efforts to become adults and stabilize their lives.
- **Develop programming strategies for addressing youth marginalization and exclusion by gender, class and location.** Develop strategies for including those male and female youth who are most in need of programming (members of the excluded, poor youth majority) and ensuring that better educated and more advantaged youth do not dominate programmes. Make programmes flexible enough to accommodate the time and childcare requirements of youth, female youth in particular. Rather than apportioning limited programme funds to different locations, consider emphasizing inclusion in youth programmes through geographic means. Youth who live in a particular neighbourhood, for example, can automatically participate in a programme: if you live there, you're in.<sup>(86)</sup>
- **Design programmes according to stated poor youth priorities, including what they need to achieve adulthood.** Ask youth what they need to become socially accepted men and women. Determine whether access to formal education is what they seek or whether they prefer assistance to meet immediate livelihood and adulthood requirements. Dramatically increasing youth access to land and housing and to vocational training (e.g., apprenticeships, mentoring, entrepreneurial business skills training, learning how to access microcredit, etc.) will probably be necessary. Health and protection needs to be integrated into programming, to address threats such as HIV/AIDS and widespread sexual and domestic violence against women and female youth by men and male youth.
- **Advocate for realistic approaches to urban youth programming.** Agencies (implementers and donors) must appreciate the daunting challenges of working with excluded, alienated and frustrated young urbanites. Anticipate that programmes will most probably not work well at first. Pilot programmes that incorporate youth views, together with assessments and evaluations, are strongly recommended.

85. Additional recommendations are found at the end of several of the author's publications, including Sommers (2007a), see reference 43; also Sommers, Marc (2007b), "Creating programmes for Africa's urban youth: the challenge of marginalization", *Journal of International Cooperation in Education* Vol 10, No 1, pages 19–31, accessible at <http://home.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/cice/10-1MarcSommers.pdf>; see reference 44, Sommers (2007c); Sommers, Marc (2006b), *Youth and Conflict: A Brief Review of Available Literature*, USAID and Equip3/ Education Development Centre, Washington DC, accessible at <http://www.eldis.org/cf/search/disp/DocDisplay.cfm?Doc=DOC22167>; and see reference 15, Sommers (2003).

86. Such an approach, however appropriate in principle, runs the risk of creating chaotic and ultimately underfunded programming. The idea here is not to swell demand beyond the means of any one programme but, rather, to attempt to demonstrate inclusion for young people who generally feel excluded. Piloting such an approach looks useful; so is carefully assessing, monitoring and evaluating such a programme – and then broadly sharing the results.

- **Invest sufficient time and funding for quality, unbiased and independent assessments, monitoring reports and evaluations.** A recent survey of youth and conflict programming literature revealed a shockingly small proportion of programmes that have carried out quality evaluation work.<sup>(87)</sup> This is unacceptable and avoidable. In all assessment, monitoring and evaluation work, incorporate regular study of marginalized urban youth in the general area who are not receiving programming. Doing so is critical because “successful” programmes may intensify feelings of exclusion, alienation, fatalism and despair in youth who are not included. Programmes must work hard to avoid this potentially dangerous outcome.
- **Coordinate, network and support local youth programmes, religious groups, youth groups and sport/cultural initiatives** operating in neighbourhoods as the structures through which youth can be reached. Such work rarely takes place. Work hard to ensure that different programmes do not include the same youth participants. Consider hiring youth leaders as programme employees. Youth leaders in mainstream civil society tend to be well-educated youth (usually males) with limited experience and understanding of marginalized urban youth needs. Hiring them to work with marginalized youth promises to provide them with important capacity-building experience.

87. See reference 85, Sommers (2006b).

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