Engaging Youth in Conflict-affected Areas: An Update on Challenges and Successes, and a Roadmap for the Future

Summary of a Two-day Symposium
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Summary by the Center for Peace Building International & Search for Common Ground
Engaging Youth in Conflict Affected Areas - An Update on Challenges and Successes, and a Roadmap for the Future

Summary

Symposium Overview

Programming for youth in areas that are affected by violent conflict has seen a significant increase over the last decade. Organizations working with foreign assistance have recognized the need to engage this important demographic group and have increased direct assistance to young people or have begun efforts to mainstream attention to youth in their broader programs. This heightened sensitivity and expanded programming by international actors has increased the understanding that young people are active participants in rebuilding communities that have been torn apart by conflict. It has also highlighted opportunities for programmatic and policy-level challenges around effective project design, coordination, funding, impact and accountability. These challenges encourage more sustained dialogue between agencies about the effects of conflict on youth and about how current practices fit within larger trends in youth programming in conflict affected areas, such as their assessment and evaluation.

In support of these efforts, the Open Society Foundations’ Youth Initiative, the British Council, and the Center for Peace Building International (CPBI) -- in partnership with Search For Common Ground (SFCG), the Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict (WNCAC), the El-Hibri Charitable Foundation, United States Institute of Peace (USIP), and the Peacebuilding & Development Institute (PDI) at American University, collectively convened a two-day symposium entitled: Engaging Youth in Conflict Affected Areas: An Update on Challenges and Successes, and a Roadmap for the Future. The Symposium was held on Thursday and Friday, January 20/21, 2011 at the El-Hibri Charitable Foundation in Washington DC, USA.

This symposium brought together over two dozen different agencies and forty-one practitioners who are working across the youth and conflict sector interested in sharing experiences and strengthening their engagement with youth. Included among these participants were fourteen who self-identified themselves as "practitioners", fifteen identified themselves as “donors”, and five as “academics”, and another seven working across academic, practitioner and donor labels.

This composition afforded the group an opportunity through which each of these sub-categories within the sector could contribute to the symposium discussions. Organizations present at the symposium included USAID, International Rescue Committee, World Vision, Relief International, Search For Common Ground, the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), Open Society Foundation, the Academy for Educational Development, United States Institute for Peace, UNFPA, International Youth Foundation, American University, Georgetown University, Wellsprings Advisors, the Canadian International Development agency, the British Council, Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council, and others.
Symposium Goals

The symposium set out to achieve four key goals. These included:

1. To learn about and clarify the most up-to-date thinking, analysis, challenges, best practices and necessary next steps in assistance and programming targeted at young people living in conflict zones;

2. To come up with new approaches to making the sector of youth in conflict more collaborative, coherent, responsive, transparent and evidence-based;

3. To foster continuing dialogue, coordination and communication between the different groups involved in this work, particularly among institutional funders, implementers and scholars, who are dedicated to working with youth in conflict affected areas; and

4. To create concrete strategies that various actors in youth programming can implement to make the field more coherent, responsible, and relevant to the needs of conflict-affected youth.

Event Format

In an effort to achieve symposium goals, meet participant expectations, and utilize participants’ expertise, the symposium was structured around a series of parallel, interactive group sessions over the course of the two days. These sessions included:

- **The joint development of a youth and conflict programming timeline:** This identified key trends and tendencies over the past decades, the driving ideas and theories of change, important turning points, as well as current research and learning around youth and conflict programming.

- **Interest group discussion among donors, practitioners, and academics:** This session allowed all three of these groups to self-reflect and identify what key new or emerging challenges and opportunities exist from their perspective within their own sub group.

- **“Attention Areas” identification:** This session allowed mixed groups of participants to identify key areas (challenges, opportunities, etc) where focused attention is needed in order to move the sector forward and improve the engagement of youth in conflict affected areas. Groups worked under the three umbrella areas of 1) programming, 2) impact and accountability, and 3) coordination and collaboration.

- **Preliminary guidelines for engaging youth:** In small mixed groups participants brainstormed to draft preliminary guidelines for what it means to engage youth in conflict areas.
Participant Expectations

At the symposium’s outset, participants expressed a number of expectations, including:

• To learn about what is working well in policy and practice including the differences and commonalities in the work of various organizations, and to find better connections between programs and policies for youth;

• To explore the question of how to define “conflict affected areas” and how this definition affects youth and its implications for programming;

• To have the event serve as a springboard for future collaborations;

• To compare approaches about emerging technologies (e.g. internet, social networking sites, mobile phones, TV, radio) as mechanisms to engage youth, or provide field protection;

• To draw out new ways of looking at issues, such as from legal structures, drug policies, and the “youth as peace-builder” lens;

• To examine how to better prepare students for work in the youth and conflict field and better bridge existing gaps between academia and field practice; and

• To directly influence mainstreaming of youth concerns into other sectoral networks.

The organizers of this symposium were encouraged to approach the cumulative work that has been done in this evolving field in a humble and collective manner. The purpose was to create a “reflective space” in an effort to understand as practitioners what we know. What follows is a summary of some of the key insights during the two days. The key issues and insights that arose from the interactive discussions will guide the development of an inter-agency collaborative learning agenda to be pursued over the next year.
Day 1 of the Symposium: An Update on Challenges, Successes, and Opportunities

“Big change can come from small programs and small change from big programs” - Symposium participant

Participants were welcomed by Robert Buchanon, President of the El-Hibri Charitable Foundation, which graciously hosted the symposium. The symposium organizers introduced the symposium schedule and why it was convened: to bring together experts across sectors to discover ways to work together more coherently as a community with a shared vision, goals and tools. Further workshops in Africa, Southeast Asia and other parts of the world may be vital follow-up steps to this event, which was mainly a convening of people from headquarters and secretariats.

Participants met from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and discussed how to break down the silence and invisibility of youth in conflict. They focused on articulating what the generalizable truths are regarding operational challenges that can be broadly agreed upon, including identifying “what works” for NGO and donor efforts. From these plenary and working group discussions on Day One came the following questions, observations, and assertions:

The Challenge for Engaging Youth

• While the donor world (North America/Europe) is growing older, the recipient world is growing comparatively younger. This has created a mismatch in understanding of needs.

• Across borders and continents, young people finding it easier to connect with one another and could be more constructively engaged with donor communities.

• The international aid community routinely fails to acknowledge or address youth interests. Currently there is no place explicitly for youth in the architecture of the cluster system for humanitarian aid or the peace-building infrastructure.

• The Open Society Foundations sponsored a useful mapping of donors active in the international youth sector¹ and may provide a basis for further discussion.

This symposium was an important first step towards addressing these issues.

Fickle Foreign Funding Flows

Donors are generally reluctant to fund grassroots youth programs in times of ongoing violence. Consequently, little funding is available for youth programming that deals with key factors in conflict. In some high-profile cases of post-conflict recovery, however, donors contribute substantial donations that local civil society actors have difficulty absorbing. Neither situation is tenable. Later in the peace building process, it becomes much harder for local organizations to find funding. Within the United States Government, as an example of a single donor that acts like multiple donors, it is a daunting task to bring coherence to conflict-related funding as it usually includes pipelines from different USAID offices, the Department of State, the military, and other federal

agencies. To further complicate this multi-faceted funding process, the perception that donor governments are supposed to work with local governments is deeply engrained in the principles that guide funding decisions. How do we move the aid industry toward the increased funding of local NGOs and grassroots youth programs in particular?

**Transnational Agency**

There are new and shifting relations among transnational advocacy networks (TANS) that are increasingly able to hold governments accountable. As a result of coordinated advocacy efforts across continents, important United Nations Resolutions such as UNSCR 1325 have mainstreamed participation of women at all levels of decisions in peace operations, humanitarian aid and prevention of gender-based violence. Similarly, U.N. resolutions can call attention to the role of youth in repatriation, reconciliation and peacebuilding. Can we – through symposiums like this – harness a greater influence among transnational advocacy networks?

**Inter-Generational Links, DDR and Non-Combatant Youth**

Where former armed youth return to their communities, they are often not socially well received by those still living there. Are there programs that address inter-generational perceptions of young people, and how do we initiate programs that build bridges across generations? This is an area identified as one of opportunity for future efforts. Current disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) practices tend to celebrate those who were soldiers and marginalize those who never carried a gun. This effectively rewards youth for joining armed groups, or is at least perceived as doing such by local communities. How can we avoid programs that appear to reward “bad behavior”?

**A Fine Line: Child Protection vs. Youth Empowerment**

The increased attention to “youth” has been accompanied by a troubling blurring of categories, especially between the categories of “youth” and “children”. There is a fine line between empowering youth and undermining legal frameworks and mechanisms that protect children in violent areas. Youth frequently have no separate legal definition or protection of their own, while children do. In many contexts, the rule of law is dangerously disconnected from the relevant realities of youth, reflected by the complete lack of communication between the justice/accountability sector and youth sector.

**Measures of Success**

How can scholars, practitioners and donors collaborate to create and coordinate the necessary analytic tools and measures? Is there a need for standard “indicators”; do these define an endgame that could be agreed upon? Organizations are looking for specific indicators more often in emergencies. Currently there are inadequate standards for defining what it means by success in post-conflict economic recovery. The World Bank is about to release a manual about monitoring and evaluation for youth issues which other donors may draw upon, covering what we know about the “value-added” of youth empowerment programs, as well as DDR programs, and their impacts on peers, families, communities beyond the immediate beneficiaries of a program? But, is it possible to document the ripple effects of youth programming?

Very rarely are organizations using rigorous analytic tools and they tend to ‘silo’ their analytics. There is a need for a more coordinated monitoring and evaluation process that allows for the sharing of metrics, etc. The Commonwealth Youth program (associated with Britain’s DfID) has been creating a youth development index.

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\(^1\) Such as UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/57/165 which promotes youth employment.
since 2005. Monitoring and evaluation can be more creative, particularly if foundations drive this creativity; they have more latitude than government funders. There is a pervasive bias against qualitative data. Also, failures are rarely published or shared, and those could also be important learning tools for other organizations and programs.

Indicators need to better measure key interventions in sub-sectors, such as holistic support for trauma, internal reconciliation within individuals, families and communities, and social and political engagement of youth. The International Rescue Committee is interested in youth’s access to financial services, and using “financial diaries” to track youth behavior, and Public Achievement offers an interesting model for social and political engagement with youth.

**Transition is More Than Just Employment**

In recent years, donors have been preoccupied with the creation of jobs, effectively ignoring funding efforts in other sectors. Employment rates alone are insufficient as the only indices. Better analytics are needed for these difficult-to-quantify dimensions, such as cultural change, social inclusion, networking and mentoring.

Employment programs that do not adequately address young people’s sense of dignity or identity could struggle to act as a conflict mitigation strategy. Donors at times fund these creative efforts, such as the CDA Listening Project\(^3\), which establishes new ways of understanding populations affected by violent conflict. Where can we collaborate on these things?

**Data Everywhere but No Synthesis**

There needs to be a better ability to aggregate and draw meta-analyses from the extensive research being conducted. How can the academic community pool together the plethora of data that exists? Could local youth collect this kind of data? What can academics do with this information to make it more useful? What is the state of the field of academia in teaching and researching youth in violent conflict? What do academics wish that donors better understood and vice versa?

What is the scalability of research? How do we combine lessons from the Open Society Foundations in Uganda, Liberia, Lebanon, Nepal, alongside UNFPA’s creation of space for young people? How do we merge lessons from youth camps, where there is much anecdotal or qualitative evidence of constructive change taking place?

**Changing the Paradigm of Agency: How to Engage Youth**

- One key lesson is to get communities to see youth as peacemakers, peacebuilders and creators of culture, not merely as threats. A related challenge is how to do so in a non-simplistic way, emphasizing the contemporary contributions and agency of youth and not merely their future potential as peace “assets.” How does one avoid the politicization of this process, as shown in Susan Shepler’s work on the children’s rights discourse in Sierra Leone? What happens when youth peacemakers are more radical than the donor community can embrace? Work can happen at two ends of this problem—engaging donors about this question of how they define and operationalize “the youth peacebuilder” and engaging local youth activists (or multiplier youth\(^4\)) in workshops on how the donor community works.

\(^3\) [www.cdainc.com/cda/project_profile.php?pid=LISTEN&pname=Listening%20Project](http://www.cdainc.com/cda/project_profile.php?pid=LISTEN&pname=Listening%20Project)

\(^4\) Defined as young people who have influence or considered key entrypoints to larger youth groups, movements, organizations, etc.
• Psycho-social support and mental health campaigns that provide counseling to indigenous populations is almost exclusively funded to and through the international community of aid agencies; is it possible to provide direct support through local youth staff instead?

• How do we systematize our engagement with youth in college or universities? In the former Yugoslavia, programs around higher education included peace education development as a field of study and careers.

• What are the windows of opportunity from intergenerational rites of transition/passage? Are there opportunities to empower youth that emerge from the experience of intergenerational rites of transition or passage? From thwarted transitions?

• How can we capitalize on the organic growth of youth-based initiatives? How can athletic sports empower youth in a manner that promotes peacebuilding?

• What can we learn from the frontiers of media and technology, where young people are connecting, organizing and defining themselves as their new spaces for expression?
Day 2 of the Symposium: A Roadmap for the Future

“If there were no donor regulations, what would you add or take out of programs?”

“We should take advantage of technology to continue this conversation.”

Day 2 focused on operationalizing the ideas raised in Day 1 and forging next steps that include sector-wide agreements such as best practice reviews and guidelines, i.e. “minimum standards or guidelines for engaging youth.” The day included much discussion about the barriers to engaging youth in violent conflicts. Participants broke into groups to discuss issues that merit guidelines for improving the effectiveness of programs and policy. The three working groups were divided between impact/accountability, coordination/collaboration and programming. Key points emerging from Day 2 included:

Programming and Strategy

Participants identified a need to engage youth across the conflict continuum, including prevention, relief, recovery, reconciliation and development. Youth need to be acknowledged as both partners and agents of change. The need for additional guidelines for when to implement a stand-alone youth program versus a youth mainstreaming approach was also highlighted.

Participants discussed how youth see and identify themselves, often as members of a group, a demographic cohort, or a generation. Some argued that generational awareness is not so common; many youth resist being aggregated into any single category. New media is playing a role in how youth shape their own identities and how they seek independence. There are cleavages between sets of young people and they often don’t see themselves as all in this together. Yet often in post-conflict contexts people find a sense of common unity in their shared experience and survival.

Advocacy

In regards to advocacy, participants highlighted the need for a clear rationale for why youth should be included in peacemaking and peacebuilding processes, and there needs to be solid documentation of how youth are currently marginalized. The challenge is determining how to provide clear and compelling yet not oversimplified messages for why youth should be engaged that can be widely agreed upon. Such a message should also recognize that “youth” are in no way a monolithic category. Is there enough evidence to explore the potential for a UN Security Council Resolution on youth, similar to the UNSC Resolution 1325 that created an entry for youth to be part of a peace building process?

The need to create structures to support a focus on youth through the U.N. cluster approach and/or through the U.N. peacebuilding architecture or a cross-stakeholder youth working group was discussed as a important step in ensuring increased youth advocating. One option might be to see a cluster lead created for a “youth focus” particularly to work through early recovery periods and fill gaps missed by other clusters. The Inter-Cluster Coordination group’s focus on Age could be one possible entry point to discuss youth and violent conflict issues. The youth and conflict agenda needs to extend into the inter-sectoral and inter-cluster meetings. Therefore an

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5 The UN cluster system was rolled out in 2005 after the Humanitarian Response Review was completed. Clusters are an informal way of organizing dialogue, resources and actors in complex emergencies, often based around a single issue: food for example. Further information on the UN Cluster System can be found at: http://complexoperations.org/cowiki/UN_Cluster_System; and the full 2005 Humanitarian Response Review is available at http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2005/ocha-gen-02sep.pdf.
annual follow-up meeting should gather together cluster heads to explore progress made and good practices identified that have a focus on youth and transition related issues beyond the emergency phase.

**Impact and Accountability**

Accountability to youth and how is a crucial piece in the implementation of effective programming but how to measure accountability remains elusive. It is important to define a common vocabulary first, starting with “youth input”, for our mutual goal-setting of assessment of results and then we can disaggregate data and program results by gender, age and vulnerability.

The working groups suggested that accountability can flow through a global or national youth advisory panel, the circulation of youth-friendly field reports, youth engagement in evaluations, peer monitoring and youth-accessible human rights documents. A recommended report for accountability and transparency is UNESCO’s annual Education for All Global Monitoring Report, whose 2011 title is *"the Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education."* The setting of solid standards for comprehensive youth assessments, using common tools that agencies can collectively adhere to would be an important part to this. The publication of failures (which Engineers without Borders has notably done) should be encouraged and to accomplish this, donors need to be persuaded to accept a wider frame of evidence. Program learning and evaluation should be thought of as progressive and not as a pass-fail process.

**Knowledge & Learning**

Participants highlighted the importance for everyone working in the field of youth and conflict to learn from best and worst practices in order to improve the quality of programs. There is a need for consistent engagement with the evolving theoretical and policy debates and the latest interdisciplinary research so that one can test assumptions and link evidence to theories of change in an ongoing and renewable way. To accomplish this, mechanisms need to be developed that will share program evaluations, compare rubrics for mapping local actors, find entry points among youth, and condense research findings into easily digestible and policy relevant formats. Practical and ethical guidelines for youth-related research and practice in conflict zones should be developed. The Hart and Tyrer model on concepts, ethics and methods for research with children may provide a good starting point for such a discussion. There is a role for a D.C.-based universities or NGOs to create a center for youth and conflict and become a clearing house for youth in conflict knowledge and data sharing, as well as offering periodic workshops, training and developing support materials.

Canadian International Development Agency recommended more research along the model of the report “Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique,” a point seconded by many in the symposium.

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8 [www.gdnonline.org/sourcebook/chapt/doc_view.php?id=5&docid=830](http://www.gdnonline.org/sourcebook/chapt/doc_view.php?id=5&docid=830) This CIDA-funded mixed-methods research identified gaps in the literature (girls in disarmament, etc.) and was particularly useful for CIDA’s policy formulation. It diagnosed how armed conflict intensifies sexism and extreme violence perpetrated by boys and men against girls and women. The study also found out that children join fighting forces as a response to violence against themselves or their community, a protection strategy.
New Standards and Guidelines

Participants debated whether it would be best to focus on getting youth-conflict standards for programming inserted into existing guidelines (like SPHERE), or if it would be more important to focus on the creation of new youth-oriented guidelines that NGOs could adopt.

What should be emphasizes is holistic programming, distinct from youth humanitarian work which now tends to be segmented and specialized. New guidelines and standards should be developed, and applied with a conflict-affected or fragile states lens. It was strongly argued that before creating new standards, their purpose should be clearly articulated and the creation of an entirely new set of standards should be justified. The process might start with the large organizations that already have ready access to many youth. Standards need to include monitoring and evaluation markers and should promote the participation of youth in evaluation, gap-identification, etc. In the research leading to the design of guiding standards, organizations should be explicit about causal pathway/theory of change – what, why and how.9 Youth programming should be seen as a component of the larger inter-generation and family programming picture at the community, national and political levels. It was recommended to use causal pathways to map out the needs of youth and who is doing what as a starting point.

Learning from INEE’s Experience

The International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) effort provides an example of the successful impact of top down programming and incentive structures. It started with getting education in emergencies on the radar screen of practitioners, donors and policy makers. This effort helped ensure personal or organizational egos were not part of the process. Therefore, INEE’s evolution can be an example for the youth and conflict field so as to rise above the structural incentives to not cooperate or coordinate.

The INEE started from scratch in developing inter-agency guidelines that are now viewed either as a success or inspirational in nature. It also has an Adolescents and Youth Task Team (AYTT) focused on emergencies.10 Its successes have hinged upon the practices of looking for existing mechanisms – cross-sectoral in which the population can find a home; ensuring the disaggregation of age data in surveys and research; and advocating for primary educational opportunities in humanitarian crises.

The Urgent Need for Collaboration

In a room that was full of donors, practitioners and academics everyone stressed the importance of working together to achieve a better coherence across stakeholders. Toward that end, various mechanisms were presented among the participants, including online platforms, such as the newer collaborative Network for Youth in Transition site, and the Youth Policy Resource site where more symposium results – beyond this summary – are posted. These resources, however, remain too ad-hoc and have yet to be institutionalized as formal collaboration mechanisms.

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9 For instance, do we hypothesize that employment stops violence?
10 See: www.ineesite.org/index.php/post/adolescence_and_youth_task_team/
Replicating this Symposium in Different Regions and Countries

The idea was put forward that this meeting should be just the first of many to be held regionally around the world with a regionally specific focus but on the same general topic. Additionally, it was proposed to have an “annual progress report of the field,” which might occur over 3-4 days either in Washington, DC, or annually in each region of the world, where all key actors come together to take stock of progress and to chart out a roadmap for the future.

It was stressed that the nature of these meetings, in Washington, DC, or London (May 2011), should have a different orientation than meetings held in the field. A key goal is to draw youth out to lead in this effort. The means and mechanisms will be different for national/regional meetings versus global meetings.

Extending this Conversation

There is not a current and ongoing progressive conversation on youth and conflict. This type of meeting needs to happen on a yearly basis so that the trends and issues in the field can be better tracked and understood. This conversation needs to be linked to parallel efforts, such as the GTZ effort on Youth Violence and International Cooperation research, the International Year of Youth conference, the WNCAC meetings, the National Youth Alliance meetings on best practices, CIDA’s forum with UNESCO on life-skills and literacy for vulnerable youth, the Youth Employment Summit, and the INEE Steering Group meetings.

The dots need to be connected vertically, creating greater space for learning between practitioners at Head Quarters and field levels. There needs to be stronger connections between local and regional networks and HQ-focused global networks.

Recurring Themes, Across Both Days

The following themes were addressed on both days of the seminar, which broadly fit into three main categories: programming, impact and accountability, and coordination and collaboration. These themes were:

- The need to have a clear rationale for why we engage youth, for public advocacy purposes;
- The need to clearly define “conflict-affected areas” as they relate to youth programming;
- The lack of data or other empirical evidence that would indicate the status, challenges and progress around youth and conflict programming;
- The current lack of M&E structures and tools that evaluate programming that targets youth in conflict affected areas;
- The need for an articulation of the shape and structure of meaningful youth participation in programming and what this should look like;
- The unrealized potential of inter-agency collaboration in many youth/conflict subsectors.
Key Symposium Accomplishments

The symposium was successful in fostering dialogue around up-to-date thinking, group analysis, initial sharing of best practice lessons, and next-steps planning for programming targeted at conflict affected youth.

The symposium also created a space in which organizations could explore partnerships among agencies. Participants were clear in their expressions of willingness to share and aggregate data, program evaluations and field lessons toward new meta-analyses. Additionally, the participation of members of the youth and conflict academic sub-sector brought a crucial voice not usually considered within similar discussions of this kind.

Prior to the symposium, an indicator of its success was considered to be whether participants would extend the discussions beyond the event itself. This was achieved. Since the symposium, a number of requests for continued conversations have surfaced from a number of different thematic strands within the sector. One such continued conversation began with a push for greater collaboration specific to Youth and Emergency programming.11

Similarly, after the event a group of academics based in the area around Washington, DC, discussed the creation of a working group on research of youth in conflict, which Search for Common Ground may host. One group of agencies planned to organize a conference call on the outcomes of the INEE Youth Policy Roundtable and the OSF/British Council Symposium and to determine where inter-agency linkages have been established and what momentum might exist for more formalized collaborative efforts.12 These participants seek input on their mapping exercise and in any future discussions.13

The symposium challenged the agencies represented to confront the high-turnover rates seen in this profession and commit to a new momentum. As in the words of one of the participants:

“We are a dynamic community; we don’t exist in the drift of events. We are constantly renewing ourselves, and I think of this as a renewal step, as part of an ongoing dynamic and not something entirely new. The contexts we work in, as well as our own professional fields, are constantly evolving, and we must adapt and see it is as a re-invitation to not only be good leaders within our own organizations, but also field building: working collaboratively to move us collectively forward as best we can. We need to be a self-renewing field.”

The symposium served as a starting point, a new beginning.

Symposium Challenges

A number of challenges were identified throughout the symposium proceedings. These challenges afforded the organizers and partners an opportunity to learn from some of the shortfalls of this engagement, in an effort to ensure that future engagements provide an even richer experience for all involved. These challenges included:

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11 Indeed several related meetings and conference calls followed during the week after this symposium.
12 IRC, INEE and UNFPA invited other participants to a February conference call at which it was decided to undertake a mapping exercise of groups working on youth in emergencies, to bridge existing gaps, and strengthen attention on youth issues between the humanitarian and development communities.
13 To assist with this mapping or for more information contact: kerstin.tebbe@inesite.org or anna@inesite.org
• Managing myriad expectations of diverse actors and their institutional interests;
• Building inclusively on previous conferences/symposia that similarly attempted to draw together stakeholders of different types to create a closer sense of community and learn from each crisis;\(^{14}\)
• Balancing the inter-agency dialogue within an open process and with limited time;
• A lack of clear definitions of “conflict” and “youth”;
• Unfamiliarity between the participants - the symposium devoted substantial time to giving participants opportunities to establish their basic viewpoints and bringing everyone up to a common starting point; and
• Ensuring full participation over both days due to busy schedules and competing priorities.

Proposed Next Steps

Near Term:

• The creation of a short 20-minute video produced by Open Society Foundations capturing essential ideas and the spirit of the Symposium;
• The production and circulation of this summary of the Symposium, by Spring of 2011.

Medium Term:

• Organize regional consultations on different continents, organized collaboratively. The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience committed to assist in hosting some of the regional consultations in one of their historic sites. These sites are specifically dedicated to remembering past struggles for justice and addressing their contemporary legacies;
• Build support for OSF’s online clearinghouse for youth policy\(^{15}\);
• Explore ways to continue the discussions through online and other means;
• Re-establish the inter-agency effort on Evaluating Youth Programs in Areas of Conflict that began in 2009 in Washington, DC, with the involvement of numerous NGOs, convened by CPBI and Search for Common Ground, and through which colleagues can share evaluation frameworks to help improve the designs of their evaluations;
• Connect the variety of activities focused on youth issues in a strategic manner;
• Establish trust-building efforts between youth leaders and governmental Ministries of youth affairs;

\(^{14}\) CPBI has tried to bring a number of aid agencies, including donors, together to share frameworks for thinking about common goals and indicators in several major emergencies, including the Horn of Africa, the 2004 tsunami and the 2008/2009 financial crisis.

\(^{15}\) www.youthpolicy.org/symposia from a collaboration between the Open Society Foundation and the British Council
• Engage a broad, inclusive community of experts to assist in expanding and refining a set of industry guidelines about programming for youth in conflict;

• Engage networks of academics around key themes. Encourage or commission conference panels and workshops that address the most pressing themes in youth and conflict programming, including some of the questions raising by this symposium;

• Build relationships with key sections in the International Studies Association and the area studies organizations such as African Studies;

• Match up individual scholars and practitioners or donors for sharing ideas and research to create a web of linkages and conduits for creative ideas and platforms for testing theories.

Longer-term:

• Work among donors to conduct longitudinal studies of the cumulative effects of field programs;

• Consider ways to convene annually or more often to bring together various themes and participants for engaging youth (emergencies, conflict, livelihood, policy, children and youth, female youth, etc.) to look at the more complete picture of meaningful youth engagement;

• Evolve, refine, publish, circulate, train and monitor the application of a set of guidance notes or Guidelines for Assisting Youth in Violent Conflict. A regional consultation process can generate findings to build toward the creation of guidelines. This may require a new inter-agency effort that can tie in with Sphere, INEE, and other larger frameworks.
Participants

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Andria Wisler  
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Rebecca Wolfe  
Mercy Corps
**Symposium Agenda**

**Engaging Youth in Conflict Affected Areas: An Update on Challenges and Successes, and a Roadmap for the Future**

**Thursday, January 20, 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 am – 9:00 am</td>
<td>Symposium check-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 am – 10:00 am</td>
<td>Welcome, Introductions and Overview of the Youth Policy Symposia Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 am – 11:30 am</td>
<td>Programming for Youth in Conflict Affected Areas – A Historical and Future Trend Analysis – A Collective Matrix &amp; ‘Timeline’ of Youth Programming</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 am – 11:45 pm</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45 am – 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Critical Inquiry: Identifying challenges and good practices in programs implemented for youth in conflict affected areas <em>(Donor, practitioner and scholar working groups)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00 pm – 2:00 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00 pm – 3:15 pm</td>
<td>Large group: Present findings from working groups about challenges, opportunities, trends and commonalities/differences, and “what works and why” in youth programming in conflict-affected areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:15 pm – 3:30 pm</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 pm – 4:30 pm</td>
<td>Impact: What the Challenges and Opportunities tell us about assessing change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 pm – 5:00 pm</td>
<td>Wrap up of the day: Confirm agenda for Day 2 according to findings from small and large group discussions.</td>
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### Day 2: A Roadmap for the Future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 am - 9:00 am</td>
<td>Symposium check-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 am - 9:15 am</td>
<td>Capturing the Participant Voices: A snapshot of Day 1</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| 9:15 am - 12:00 pm | Key Issues that Merit Guidelines for More Effective Policy and Programs in conflict affected areas: Working groups;  
|                  |   • Programming                                                                                |
|                  |   • Impact and Accountability                                                                  |
|                  |   • Coordination and Collaboration                                                             |
| 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm | Lunch                                                                                            |
| 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm | Identifying and Developing preliminary/Draft Guidelines for Key Issues                        |
|                  |   a. What is the Issue?                                                                       |
|                  |   b. Why is it Important                                                                      |
|                  |   c. Recommendations for better policy and Practice                                           |
| 3:15 pm - 3:45 pm | Connecting the Dots: Immediate next steps for a way forward                                   |
| 3:45 pm - 4:00 pm | Symposium wrap-up: Announcements, next steps in the series, etc.                               |
Supporting Agencies

Implementing Agencies