

Johann Jacobs Foundation Conference on:

**Youth in Cities:
Successful Mediators of Normative Development**

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CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Keynote Address

Dr. Mamphela Ramphele focused on the important role that young people can play as agents of social change and reminded us that youth are often the harbingers of cultural, social or economic evolution within and across countries. The speaker explored how youth can become important agents of positive societal transformation, but cautioned that once transformed, society again often ignores the condition of its youth and confines them to a marginalized status that undervalues their worth. It was suggested that much of the current literature on youth is confined to an assessment of the negative consequences of maladaptive behavior and the tremendous costs incurred by society in regulating deviant behavior. However, the author reminded us that action by South African youth was the main impetus that caused the downfall of apartheid and brought about the new State. In the Black Consciousness Movement, youth were driven by a deep desire to improve their own quality of life and by the knowledge that change would not come from the adults in the society. Overwhelmed by the sheer enormity of the task, adults had become resigned to their fate and lacked the motivation to bring about change. Risk management, therefore, or the ability to confront adversity in a cautious and calculated way, became the

optimal solution for these youth rather than risk aversion. Heightened self-esteem among youth in the time period prior to emancipation was the crucial ingredient that allowed them to feel that their efforts would ultimately have a beneficial effect on the nation as a whole. To continue to tap into this valuable resource, new or established institutions need to ensure that self-esteem and confidence continue to be encouraged and enhanced, thereby affording youth the opportunity to remain valuable members of society and reach their full potential.

Session 1: Twilight of the 21st Century

The three papers in this session discussed the array of problems that perplex social scientists devoted to understanding the impact of poverty on the lives of the poor. The opening paper highlighted some of the pitfalls associated with conducting comparative research. Traditional methodical approaches to understanding the causes and consequences of urban poverty which have been developed in the North, may not be suitable for understanding the complex array of economic, political and social forces which have marginalized the poor in developing and underdeveloped countries of the South. Even basic notions of what constitutes “poverty” are open to interpretation when heterogeneous groupings of advanced and emerging countries are compared. Data banks developed in the West now house inordinate amounts of data that have been standardized to allow for greater ease of comparison but the result has been that inadequate attention is devoted to the important contextual indicators which better reflect differential realities.

In addition to the lack of a common definition of “poverty,” the paper pointed out that the field also suffers from an underdeveloped theoretical framework on which researchers can base their analyses. Although there has been much speculation about why

the poor are poor, the author lamented the fact that little in the way of a sound body of theory has evolved over the years what might provide convenient road maps to guide empirical investigation. The analyses that have been conducted have been overly concerned with the behavior or attitudinal mindsets of the poor and have completely ignored the role the non-poor, mainstream institutions and political entities play in maintaining the inequality.

Problems associated with the implementation of comparative research projects have further contributed to our lack of an operational definition of poverty and a dearth of knowledge about how situational or structural forces impede economic development. Researchers from different racial and ethnic backgrounds or who come from different schools of thought often find themselves in conflict when attempting to agree on investigative research strategies or for that matter, on what the basic research questions are which need to be pursued.

For many of the reasons cited above, cross-national studies have often proved too onerous for researchers to carry out. Instead, they tend to focus on the national context, which leaves a false impression that the “causes and manifestations of poverty have their roots in specific cultures.” To overcome this myopic approach, the paper stressed the need for a new approach which tackles head-on the issues that have confounded comparative research heretofore. One such initiative is the Comparative Research Program on Poverty (CROP) which has established a world-wide network of more than twelve hundred poverty researchers and others involved in poverty alleviation. The program aims to the garner the combined talents of diverse groups of individuals whose

collective input would advance the knowledge base and help in the eradication of global poverty.

The second paper decries the woeful advances some countries have made in protecting children's social rights and contends that international human rights laws can be used to prod these countries to be more proactive. Building on the argument that human rights law is intended to provide for the dignity of the individual and the redistribution of power in a more equitable fashion, the paper suggests that issues relating to child poverty are a good testing ground for translating the tenets of the law into action.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a case in point, which not only compels States to protect the health and development of children, but also delineates the range and scope of protective mechanism that countries should employ. However, international law has been unsuccessful in compelling States to conform, when transgressions are identified. In addition, national and international courts are often unable to distinguish between States' that attempt to skirt the law from those that do not have the infrastructure to enforce it. To assure conformity the author argues for legislative reform that allows for more involvement on the part of citizens and advocates to inform court proceedings. In addition, more convenient and readily interpretable measures of children's rights indicators need to be developed which would allow courts the opportunity to better adjudicate violations.

The final paper reviewed the effectiveness of public health intervention programs in the United States over the past fifteen years. Program developers concerned about increased youth homicides have actively sought to design interventions aimed at curbing the growing threat to youth health and well-being. Not only have the incidences of youth

violence dramatically increases over the last decade but the severity of these occurrences have escalated as well. As a result, the U.S. spends about \$53.5 billion for intervention programs each year to ameliorate this menacing trend. Reviewing extant literature the author pointed out that acts of youth violence most often occur in the context of personal or acquaintance relationships. The offender and the victim are likely to be poor young males who have been exposed to violence in the past – especially family violence. Alcohol or some other controlled substance is often involved and the perpetrators may often be depressed at the time that the incident occurs. Black youth are disproportionately more likely to be the victims of a homicide. This differential is accounted for by the fact the black youth are more likely to be poor and reside in areas of concentrated poverty where crime and violent behavior proliferate.

Public health officials have responded by proposing primary, secondary and tertiary preventive measures to address this growing problem. Primary strategies often involve public health messages that seek to reduce the level of societal violence in general, or attempts by the criminal justice systems to limit the number of guns in circulation. Secondary measures target specific at-risk subgroups and utilize educational interventions that emphasize behavior modification. More forceful attempts to decrease crime involve removing perpetrators from circulation entirely and constitute the most extreme or tertiary approach to violence prevention. The author discussed specific programs that have had a significant impact on violent crime reduction utilizing either primary or secondary strategies. While incarceration is necessary in the most serious cases, the more proactive measures have been successful in averting violent incidences before they occur.

Session Discussion -

Much of the ensuing dialogue centered on changing cultural norms which may be responsible for the increase in rates of youth violence. The causes and consequences of these normative changes were explored and ways to ameliorate those aspects of popular culture that legitimate or glorify violence were delineated.

Recent incidences of school violence in rural areas of the U.S. suggest that in many ways efforts by public health officials to thwart violent confrontations between youth have not been effective. One reason why anti-violence messages are not resonating with youth is because it has become fashionable or stylish to carry a gun. Lethal violence has become more common simply because more kids have guns in their possession, and are therefore more prone to use them when involved in an altercation, however minor.

The media was singled out as a primary culprit in the proliferation of guns and violence. Youth are highly impressionable and are affected by the constant bombardment of violent acts on television and in movies. As a result youth are much more knowledgeable about weapons in general and favor the more powerful and lethal guns carried by fictional super heroes.

Increased violence among girls was seen as a particularly worrisome trend and one that requires specific attention. In the U.S. rates of elementary and middle school age female offenders are on the rise. The point was made that little research has been done to date to account for the increase in violent crimes among girls, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the media may be partly to blame. Recent cartoon and fictional characters such as Power Rangers, which portray females in a more aggressive light than ever before, may also be partially responsible.

While girls have historically been vulnerable to the same risk factors as boys, such as poverty, peer pressure, and poor parenting, they always performed better than males in most prosocial activities, such as educational attainment and school graduation. Girls have traditionally been more vulnerable in other areas, namely out-of-wedlock child birth, sexual abuse as a child and prostitution. However, this gap appears to be narrowing as girls become more involved in gangs and therefore are more likely to be exposed to, and be involved in, acts of violence that are usually associated with male gang members.

The way the State intervenes in the lives of younger people was also brought up for discussion. It was suggested that police attempts to control at-risk neighborhoods by increasing their visibility and, in many occasions using violence as a first line of control, especially in minority areas, have greatly undermined the relationship between the community and law enforcement officials. A cycle of violent confrontations is put in motion whereby police activities actuate an aggressive response from the community, in particular among youth, which in turn leads the police to become even more physically aggressive in their handling of volatile situations. Attendees called for more efficient ways for communities that have been ill-served by the police in the past to work in tandem with law enforcement agencies to combat crime and serve the needs of all of the residents.

Managing to reduce the risk that young people face from the State (in the form of police brutality, unjust sentencing, harassment, etc.) and themselves (gang violence, school violence, etc.) should be a major priority for the service community. Programs should seek ways to help youth deal with their anger in a nonviolent, non-confrontational fashion. In addition, the service community should work in collaboration with the authorities to

understand the needs of at-risk communities and help them to better react to transgressions in a manner that is not likely to elicit a bellicose response.

Finally, participants worried about the implications of globalization on the normative social development of youth. In particular, participants voiced a concern that developing countries face inordinate difficulties in addressing unrealistic expectations among youth who have been exposed to the “excesses” of more developed countries. The Americanization of some less affluent countries and the targeting of youth by marketing campaigns to purchase costly items which they can ill afford has led to a disparity between what youth expect and what a society can offer them. Youth are becoming unwilling to accept the kinds of jobs that are currently available in less affluent countries because of low wages, and are therefore more likely to engage in criminal activities to obtain the consumer products that are touted by these companies.

Key Points –

- Can and should international law be used to require countries to improve the well-being of youth? Who should decide the standards by which countries are judged and how should they be applied?
- How can we better assess the predictors of antisocial behavior among youth? Can youth be assured a safe environment in which to grow and develop without the threat of physical, emotional or psychological abuse?
- To what extent are the expectations of youth keeping pace with national development? Are occupational expectations realistic given the economic realities of some developing and under-developed countries? What can countries do to allow greater social and economic mobility opportunities for youth?

Session 2: Homelessness and Social Isolation

With the growing urbanization of many Central American countries, the number of families and children that flock to the major metropolitan cities in the region is growing at

a staggering rate. The author of the overview paper estimated that 4 out of every 10 people in Latin America currently reside in an urban area, and the number is expected to increase to 6 out of 10 by the year 2050. Much of the increase in overall numbers reflects a growth in the number of young people in the population, and it is estimated that in Brazil alone nearly 40% of the population is less than 17 years old – half of whom are born into poor families.

The growth of urban poverty and in particular the marginalization of youth has fueled a public debate about the plight of children who are omnipresent on the streets of primary cities in South America. In Brazil, the reaction by the authorities to the presence of unsupervised children roaming the streets has been to quell their numbers by the use of sometimes harsh and punitive measures. Recent media reports about the intolerable conditions experienced by street kids detained in state run reformatories, and the worrying numbers of youth who have died while under the care of authorities, has led to a public demand for more humane treatment of these youth. But the problems seem so intractable that an in-depth understanding of why children are on the streets in the first place and what kinds of interventions are best suited to their needs is urgently required. Inspired in part by the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Statute on the Child and Adolescent was enacted in October 1990 to protect children's rights in Brazil and was heralded as "the best child protection legislation in the world" by the late UNICEF director James Grant.

The response by Brazil's community-based organizations and NGOs to the conditions of street children has been encouraging. Preventive programs are being developed that address some of the disparate reasons why children are homeless. These

programs distinguish between working children who trade their wares on the street and often return home to parents and siblings with their day's earnings, and homeless children, who spend their entire lives on the street and who have little or no contact whatsoever with family members. However, despite the growing success rate of some of these programs, the number of young people who have been fortunate enough to come in contact with these interventions remains relatively low. The paper decries the fact that funds are not readily available to support preventive programs and calls for the creation of youth-based approaches that target all youth, regardless of socioeconomic background or level of disadvantage. The author feels that Brazilians will be more supportive of public expenditures that promote the well-being of all children, and not just those on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. It is important therefore, to change our focus from the plight of the most marginalized or deviant children to the rights of all children regardless of social background or disadvantaged status. The paper ends with several case studies of programs that have been successful in using public resources to implement inclusive programs for children from diverse socioeconomic groups. These programs aid all children in the Brazilian school system and have been especially successful in preventing low-income children from ending up on the streets.

Program Interventions

The first paper described the Casa Alianza program (known as Covenant House in English) which is a non-governmental agency serving street children in four countries in the Americas: Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Casa Alianza, serves more than 4,400 street children each year in Latin America and tackles the problem of street

children using several different approaches, namely street outreach, crisis centers, group homes, and family reintegration.

Outreach, by street educators, is a time-consuming strategy that involves befriending youth while they are still on the street. Great care is taken to earn their trust and to encourage them to accept the sanctuary of the program in a fashion that does not intimidate or coerce.

The Crisis Center caters to children who are brought there by street educators, come of their own accord, or are referred by the authorities. Here children are provided with a safe haven to regain their composure and readjust to life in a normal environment. Often, this requires having to relearn basic interpersonal skills such as treating others with respect and compassion. Group Homes, another in the series of services offered by Casa Alianza, is the next step in social reintegration. Youth in these facilities share living space with a small group of peers and obtain the skills necessary to make a complete adjustment to life off the streets. In instances where family members exist and the home is judged to be safe and secure for the youth, actions are taken at this stage to begin a process of unification. Other programs offered include facilitates to house teen parents and their babies and drug rehabilitation for street kids who are addicted to sniffing solvent-based products or harder drugs such as crack cocaine. As part of their comprehensive services Casa Alianza also offers legal counseling and AIDS prevention and awareness classes.

In sum, the sheltered care approach taken by Casa Alianza provides wrap-around services to youth who have been ostracized by society and whose lives on the streets have resulted in the acquisition of nonnormative practices that put them at odds with the rest of

society. The program seeks to reintegrate them back into society in a supportive and constructive manner that is conducive to the healthy development of the youth.

The second paper discussed the situation of the urban poor in India, a country which has also experienced a sharp increase in the number of urban dwellers in its major cities. As a consequence, destitution and its concomitant social ills are rapidly increasing. This relatively new country (it obtained independence from England on August 15, 1947) has focused much of its attention on national development and therefore has little resources remaining to provided services to the poor, disadvantaged residents of the ever-expanding slums that adjoin the major cities.

The paper argues that to be successful, service-delivery by intervention programs in low-income communities need to involve community spokespersons or residents who are capable of playing a leadership role in mobilizing the support of other residents. In addition, program developers need to carefully plan intervention strategies that meet the needs of the poor in a systematic fashion that allows them to have a voice in the initiatives being proposed. Negotiations between program providers and the target population will ensure that a realistic appraisal of the problem and the proposed solutions are planned and delivered in a non-threatening, productive manner.

The final paper described the efforts of a program in Jordan to create “prosocial communities” that builds on the existing institutional resource base of society. The program utilizes an action-oriented approach that involves an ongoing reorientation of effort to meet the changing needs of the population being served. The philosophy undergirding the project posits that emergent strategies are deployed gradually, building on each other, in an effort to create a causal ordering of beneficial effects. This approach, it is

argued, “is valuable when an environment is too unstable or complex to comprehend or too imposing to defy.” Five main recognized constraints on the health development of children (frustrated aspirations, changed family relations, neighborhood deterioration, truncated roles of children, and ineffective institutions) have been singled out as warranting special attention in developing prosocial, stable environments for children to grow. The author recognizes the fact that programs which seek to tackle difficult social issues that occur in environments that are either socially, economically, or politically unstable need to be allowed time to evolve and find their niche. A certain degree of drift or foundering is to be expected as programs attempt to create order in an otherwise chaotic or haphazard situation. Utilizing this approach, weaknesses in the program delivery can be identified in a timely fashion and efforts can then be made to improve on the design.

Session Discussion -

The point was made that a predominance of children in developing countries in comparison to an aging population in countries in the West suggests that the former face a unique set of problems associated with catering to the needs of their youngest citizens. Limited by meager resources, these countries often have to rely on small pilot or demonstration programs that bring about incremental improvements in people’s lives. Conventional wisdom suggests that small programs are not insignificant and that they often can enhance creativity and innovation in a piecemeal approach. Much of what happens at the community level can be applied to the city and national level once resources become available.

Despite the enormity of the problems discussed in this session, there appears to be a recognizable and common path which characterize the approach interventions have taken in many of the countries under discussion. Two dominant strategies have emerged from the presentations - one of which involves a “bottom up” approach and the other a “top down” solution to the problem. Beginning with the former, national policies can be implemented which have as their goal the provision of a minimum set of safe and conditions for people to live by. Once these basic building blocks are in place, efforts should then addressed toward identifying a coherent set of citizens’ needs that are necessary to affect positive change. At this level it is essential to involve all of the stakeholders, including policy makers, program developers and the marginalized, to establish a framework that involves action-oriented research and input from stakeholders to develop necessary and targeted interventions that support families and children.

The bottom up approach starts with the successes of small projects or pilot programs that have a demonstrated impact on youth well-being. The lessons learned in these limited settings can be applied to more broadly adapted situations later on. In this manner program developers have the luxury of starting programs off incrementally and attending to any weakness in the design before replications are initiated.

A lot of the group discussion focused on how youth are engaged as stakeholders and the amount and type of responsibility we expect them to shoulder in creating a society that best meets their needs. While many of the papers called for allowing youth to play a more active role in the development of policies and programs that govern their well-being, a note of caution was expressed that youth may not be in a position to know what is best for them. For instances, youth may not be cognizant of the macro level social and

economic problems that fuel much of the disadvantage that they encounter in their daily lives. It remains to be seen how youth are best engaged at the policy level and the role both adults and youth play in developing and implementing programs that aim to increase youth competence and capacity to grow.

One presenter prioritized the role that public education can play in allowing children to feel like they belong and are recognized members of the community. The streets, it was argued are an attractive lure for children whose communities are devoid of opportunity or resources to engage them or provide them an opportunity to play a role in their own development. Attendees lamented that fact that all too often we tend to focus on the social risk associated with high poverty neighborhoods, or environs where youth are exposed to a plethora of deviant or nonnormative opportunities, while ignoring the lack of prosocial mainstream resources which would allow children to become productive members of a community. Institutional supports, such as schools, health clinics, and recreation facilities which are normally provided by the State, are often woefully inadequate in high poverty areas, thereby making residents, especially youth, more susceptible to antisocial activities.

It was noted that in spite of the fact that a large number of the poor are still woefully undereducated, global trends do suggest that in all countries literacy rates are steadily increasing. A lagged effect of this improvement may be in evidence later on when a more educated workforce is looking to find work in countries that do not have in place an economic infrastructure that will guarantee employment at levels beyond basic low-status jobs.

Key Points --

- How can societies, local governments, neighborhoods or families add value to children's lives when faced with an enormous dearth of available resources and the need to prioritize expenditures?
- How do we gauge the proper allocation of resources within countries that would place children's issues high on the national agenda and what are the impediments for making this happen were?
- Can emancipatory frameworks be developed that combine education and work with children's needs to continue to contribute to a household economy?

Session 3: Social Problems

The overview paper in this session dealt with social justice and deviance and seeks to situate youth delinquency in the social context in which it occurs. Real improvements in the criminal behavior of youth will not be possible until we address the broad situational and structural obstacles to the normative development of youth. In the opening section of the paper, the author reviewed crime trends in several countries and commented on the difficulties associated with cross-national comparisons because of differences in the way countries report and record crimes. Nevertheless, there are striking similarities in the profiles of young offenders across all countries – they tend to be “young men, with low income, low educational achievement, no employment, a weak attachment to parents, and (who) move frequently.” While we seem to know a lot about who commits certain crimes, we still do not have a sound understanding of why. The author argues that many of the answers are to be found in the broader societal forces that affect the life chances of urban youth and predispose them to a deviant lifestyle.

The most forward thinking strategies concerning crime prevention require establishing a constellation of programs involving individuals, families and communities

aimed at ensuring the normative development of youth. Unfortunately, where examples of these kinds of wrap-around services are available they are all too often directed at a specific problem or group of individuals and do not take into account the broader social fabric. In other words, what is lacking is an emphasis on the transformative strategies that ensure the successful integration of youth into a society in a meaningful and constructive manner. To this end, special attention was given in the paper to the role played by public space in allowing youth to feel that they are valued members of a community. These areas are often where youth are most visible and highly regulated. It's also here that youth come in contact with figures of authority that seek to exclude or regulate their activities. How we democratize the use of public space so that youth are considered primary stakeholders and have a voice in the democratic process that decides their fate, was one of the challenges the paper sought to address.

Youth offenders need to be viewed in terms of the collective agents of change themselves and connect them to a wider process of community empowerment. To understand why youth offend in the first place we need to pay particular attention to the social ecology of poverty. Often youth get involved in criminal activities, not only because they are poor but also because they live in disadvantaged communities that lack basic social solidarity and supports. Much of youth criminality is located at the neighborhood level and therefore more focus needs to be brought to bear on the communities in which at-risk youth reside. Concentrations of high unemployment often lead to the demise of other social resources that cater to the needs of the disadvantaged. Poor urban youth are systematically more isolated from mainstream social institutions (such as schools and job opportunities) that inculcate social norms and responsibility as a result. This in turn leads

to cultural and societal exclusion whereby poor youth develop adaptive strategies to manage life in these marginalized environments and the spiral downwards is hastened as they become more and more disenfranchised.

The author discussed three broad approaches to crime prevention, namely coercive, developmental, and accommodating. Deterrence involves lessening the opportunity to cause trouble by systematically limiting the presence or visibility of youth in the community, and is achieved for instance, by enforcing dress codes, limiting the number of youth that can gather together in public places, and youth curfews. The developmental approach emphasizes the alleviation of social problems by including young people as part of the resolution process. This option requires that the government play a greater role in ensuring the adequate provision of services and an emphasis on multi-agency cooperation where strategic partnerships are formed to successfully intervene in the lives of youth in a meaningful way. Finally, an accommodating approach attempts to structure solutions that allow all sides to have their interests protected in a non-judgmental fashion. The paper highlights several successful examples of accommodating approaches that deploy a holistic approach to intervening in the lives of youth and which include the youth themselves as valued partners in the development of crime prevention interventions.

Programs Interventions

Street Kids International (SKI) works with a cadre of agencies around the world which serve children and youth working on the streets and primarily helps with the training of workers and the development of programs that address the economic needs of children. The author suggests that the world's focus on the plight of homeless, street children may be diverting valuable resources and attention from more fundamental and far-reaching

problems affecting urban youth today. International organizations have estimated that hundreds of thousands of children live and work on the streets of the world's major cities and the impact of these findings on philanthropic organizations has been a major trend in program development that targets homeless children. The author argues, that in fact the number of truly homeless children is much smaller and that a majority of children who work the streets often return to a home and family life at the end of each day. More attention should be given, according to the author, to two of the fundamental forces that are ultimately responsible for the myriad of problems that affect children, namely persistent poverty and physical, emotional and psychological abuse. SKI's approach involves broad-based advocacy that mobilizes institutions and groups to provide universal coverage to at-risk kids, which affords them alternatives to street work, in a nonpunitive manner.

Similar sentiments were expressed in the second paper in which the conditions of street girls were described and programs aimed at curbing the sexual exploitation of these youth discussed. Invariably these girls come from large and poverty stricken families and may have experienced serious deprivation, and in some instances abuse, before ending up on the streets. Without a basic education or skills to gain legitimate employment in the mainstream economy, these girls are left with no options but to engage in sex work to obtain money to live. The paper documented the extent of the problem in the Philippines and also discussed the extent and scope of the programs that have been proposed to deal with it. Innovative strategies, such as foster care programs that house and care for child prostitutes, or training programs for child mentors have been implemented with some success. Like many of the papers in the conference, the author underscored the prominent role macro level forces play in the exploitation of children, and cautioned policy makers

that the successes of intervention programs such as those operated by CHILDDHOPE International are short-lived if efforts are not taken to address the social, economic, and political realities that give rise to inequality.

Session Discussion -

Much was made of society's attempts to provide citizens with a safe environment in which they can go about their daily routine. High levels of social alarm lead people to demand more protection and policing. Police responses are therefore becoming more proactive in an attempt to address street crime even before it occurs. This involves targeting at-risk communities and often employs oppressive or aggressive modes of policing that utilize a zero tolerance approach to keeping communities safe. All too often this has involved banishing or carefully limiting youth's access to public space in an effort to ensure that adults do not feel intimidated. The suggestion was made that fear of crime is a commodity that is sold to an unsuspecting public to increase sales of anti-crime devises, approve the use of public funds to build more jails, and the legitimization of coercive approaches by law enforcement officials to regulate communities.

To ensure security, while at the same time allowing youth to enjoy and partake in public spaces, we need to develop protocols and principles at the community level. But the question was posed about how youth involvement is ensured and when, how, and under what circumstances, can youth be expected to play a dominant role in determining the policies that govern them? It was noted that empowerment is being used as a catch-all phrase and we need to get beyond generalizations and focus on specific arenas where youth can play an active role. Much more work needs to be done in helping program developers understand how youth can be involved in the planning process while at the

same time realizing that we need more research to determine the underlying mechanism by which youth become in deviant or nonnormative activities in the first place.

KEY POINTS

- How do we get beyond the management of nonnormative youth to tackle the situations under which these maladaptive behaviors arise in the first place?
- How do developing and underdeveloped address problems relating to antisocial behavior among youth without the luxury of detailed demographic and economic data that are so readily available to researchers and policy experts in the North?
- More effort should be devoted to evaluating the effects of small scale demonstration programs, including the development of implementation and process evaluation techniques that will increase the likelihood that these success can be replicated with success.

Session 4: Life Skills

The overview paper in this section described in great detail some of the realities and common misconceptions of child labor around the world. Two important questions were posed in this paper -- to what extent is poverty the causal predictor of child employment? How is child employment related to life skills and education? The authors argued that while we have lots of estimates about the number of children around the world that work, the reality is we really do not have an accurate assessment of the extent of the problem. What is clear is that significant numbers of children are involved in some kinds of work as part of their everyday experience. What is unclear is what kinds of work they are involved in and to what extent does this work either benefit or harm the youth? The fact that we cannot accurately gauge the number of child workers evokes two major problems 1) we really cannot employ palliatives for problems of which we do not have a

clear understanding and 2) by avoiding the issue we essentially leave many aspects of childhood invisible and therefore unattended.

The authors distinguish between “work” and “labor” and suggests that while these concepts may be useful ways to distinguish between types of employment that are either beneficial or exploitative, the term “child labor” may have become such a loaded and pejorative term that it has clouded the debate. We need to refocus our efforts on understanding the conditions under which children are employed and begin to answer some very fundamental questions about what kinds of work are harmful and under what circumstances children should be allowed to work. The authors challenge us to confront these perplexing issues and pointed out instances where well intentioned intervention have resulted in children losing jobs in factories in developing and underdeveloped countries but may have unintentionally harmed them and their families. Follow-up studies of these youth indicate that most did not return to school but found work elsewhere that often paid less than their previous job. The authors suggest that some youth may in fact benefit from simultaneously working and going to school. Knee jerk attempts to abolish child work altogether will not necessarily result in favorable outcomes for these children however, and we are urged to consider more innovative approaches that combine work for pay with traditional modes of education.

Programs

The paper on life skills education for young Ugandans explores the impact of war and the ravages of community upheaval on youth. The author documents the enormity of the problem NGOs face helping young Ugandans negotiate a world that is fraught with danger, in a country lacking a strong institutional framework upon which to build

supportive services for youth. This paper is a sobering reminder that new or emerging problems in some of the world's poorest countries have the potential to decimate the lives of the young and vulnerable. Following years of violence and terror at the hands of an unscrupulous dictator, Uganda is only recently starting to realize some improvements in the lives of its population after years of being among the poorest performers on many indicators of well-being. But a lot remains to be done. War continues to disrupt the quality of life for residents in Northern Uganda as warring factions destroy schools, hospitals, and places of residence, and conscript young men into the armed conflict. Young girls are often victims of rape and sexual abuse.

Uganda, like the rest of Africa, is battling another lethal enemy with little success, AIDS. Death rates are increasing steadily as are the number of children who are orphaned by the death of both parents. The forecast is bleak for many countries in the Southern hemisphere and global attention is urgently needed to stem this epidemic.

The second paper in the series documented the impact of a program in Chicago that inculcates youth with a moral doctrine for living. The program utilizes a moral approach to youth development rooted in a Judeo-Christian tradition and framed around the teachings of the Catholic Church. Aimed at boys and girls in grades four through twelve in high-risk neighborhoods, the program seeks to provide them with a moral compass that guides their everyday lives. Good character, the program argues, is the most powerful ally a person can have as he or she pursues achievement and fulfillment in professional and personal pursuits.

The last paper looked at the success of participatory programs for children of South African streets and squatter camps and, like many other papers in the conference,

calls for a more inclusive approach to solving child-related social problems. A focus on deviance and normlessness, the authors argue, diverts us from attending to the lack of adequate programs that deal with the “whole child.” Two programs, *Street-Wise* and *Growing-Up in Cities*, are discussed and their efforts to help children achieve autonomy and self-assuredness delineated. Both programs strive to create a physically and socially safe environment in which children’s positive identities can be nurtured and allowed to flourish. The evolution of both programs demonstrates the need for multifaceted approaches that are allowed to gel over time as program developers consider the most effective means to deal with children’s individual and group needs. One of the main strengths of both programs, as discussed by the authors, was their ability to provide individualized, and dedicated attention to each child.

Session Discussion

The discussion centered on distinctions between school and work and the extent to which youth can and do engage in both simultaneously. The suggestion was made that we need to broaden the definition of education in terms of academic achievement and life skill attainment. Schools should play a lead role in this by providing nontraditional, viable and flexible approaches to educating children. School and work should be integrated in some circumstances where there is perceived benefit for the child. It is important, however, to understand when and how this value-added integration occurs and is appropriate. It is also important to involve the child’s own perspective in designing policies to the extent that we take into consideration the often-overlooked benefits that work can provide for children and their families. In many instances, child workers not only contribute to the

household economy but they also realize substantial gains in terms of increased efficacy and self-assuredness by being productive members of a family and community.

When the data on child employment are considered, a different pattern of child labor activities emerges which suggests that children in all parts of the world are involved in both school and work to varying degrees. In many countries of the North children combine full-time education with part-time work, in some countries in the South, full-time work is interspersed with academic training, and in some situations children either work full-time or attend school full-time.

Given the preponderance of child workers in the world today, the focus of international regulatory bodies has been on intolerable forms of work – or situations where children are placed at risk (such as slave or bonded labor). The difficulty arises when we try to distinguish between those marginal areas where it is not readily evident that a child's best interests are being served by not being allowed to work. This problem has proved the most vexing for regulation agencies. To be done adequately we need to have better and more reliable measures of important predictors of prosocial development such as health, education, psychosocial adjustment, and recreation, and have a greater understanding of how work may interfere with, or contribute to, normative orientations.

Character education and the moral development of children was a contentious issue and elicited much debate. While attendees agreed with the premise that some of our traditional institutions (such as the church, school, or indeed the family) which are charged with moral instruction may be failing our young people, many questioned the absolutism of religious organizations that may lack moderation and tolerance for alternative viewpoints. Policy makers cannot assume that there is only one true strategy that must be

stringently enforced, but rather that methods should be employed that are tailored to the needs of the individuals irregardless of religious denomination, social class, or lifestyle.

A call was made to promote international programs which develop innovative teaching methodologies which are tailored to the needs of youth in each country and not some universal education policy that is ill-suited to realities of children's lives. National youth policies should be encouraged, based on needs assessments, to identify what young people require to lead successful, meaningful lives and the kinds of interventions that should be in place to make this goal a reality. NGOs and program developers can play an important role in developing this child-focused framework which is context specific and is adaptive enough to cater to children's needs. Using this model, any attempt to understand the benefits of work therefore should take into consideration the views of the children themselves and the benefits they perceive from their participation.

Key Points --

- What are the key variables that mediate the impact of employment on youth?
- Does work prevent transgressive behavior among youth in societies where no alternative intercessions are available to counteract the dangers of pervasive idleness?
- How can societies better equip youth to capitalize on the range of occupational possibilities that globalization will realize?

Session 5: Social and Psychological Well-Being

The overview paper in this session describes a theoretical model the authors have proposed to understand the underlying causal mechanism that defines and predicts child well-being. After describing the epistemology of their approach, the authors discuss two practical applications of the theory, including a project in Chicago that looks at how

young people characterize their own well-being with a view toward involving them as collaborators in applied research. The second project involves a consortium of NGOs, universities and government officials throughout Latin America who are advancing a rights-based approach to adolescent well-being.

The paper explores extant literature on well-being and concludes that the concept has not been well established and few adequate operational measures have been satisfactory proposed or developed. The authors note some promising advances in this regard, however, notably the efforts of the U.S Federal Interagency Forum on the Child and Family Statistics, which recently produced a report listing of some 25 tested constructs of several domains of well-being, the Youth Quality of Life Scale (YQOL) developed by researchers at the University of Washington, and a comprehensive assessment of well-being that is being developed by the Search Institute in Minnesota.

Drawing on the work of Sen and Habermas, the authors contend that a deliberative process, one that involves children as major stakeholders in the framing and implementation of research initiatives that explore well-being, has both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits. Intrinsically, children can develop competence and confidence due to their involvement in the research process, and extrinsically, the involvement of children in the research initiative can play a major role in helping to develop more precise measures of this multifaceted construct.

Papers

This session departed somewhat from the format of the other sessions in the conference in that the papers presented here discussed ongoing research activities that involve the impact of communities-in-crisis on youth. Two papers focused on the effects

of war and one looked at how a sudden change in the racial and ethnic makeup of a community affects youth functioning.

The first paper looked at youth in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and examines whether cities have ceased to function as “integration machines” for young people. Recent macro-trends in modern societies have created greater polarization as people strive for individuality, while at the same time they try to develop and agree on basic social norms and rules for interpersonal exchange. Because of global economic trends and migration of groups within and across national boundaries, the basic institutional framework that has helped to create and solidify cohesion has been stretched to the breaking point. Consequently, a growing disparity is evident between disparate groups who have less and less opportunity to interact with each other in modern cities.

Residential segregation is discussed as just one example of how groups are isolated from each other. High poverty neighborhoods and enclaves that house recent immigrant groups have proliferated in many German cities and led to the growing distrust and xenophobic sentiments that groups harbored for each other. The paper discussed the problems faced by governments in attempting to achieve complete integration of all members of a society. The authors suggested that future trends toward integration may involve partial inclusion of certain groups, by allowing them access to certain benefits enjoyed by the entire population, but at the same time permanently regulating them to some inferior status that prevents them from accessing all privileges which full citizenship entails.

The second paper deals with the conflict in Northern Ireland and discusses a longitudinal comparative study of societal attitudes among young people in Belfast,

Northern Ireland and Dublin, in the Republic of Ireland. Two groups of young people who come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds were interviewed in 1982 and again in 1997. The goal of the project was to compare and contrast pathways for opportunity and social influences on the two populations and to see what role large-scale strife and violence play in formulating these orientations. Group comparisons were made on a number of outcome indicators, including attitudes toward society, participation in politics, trust of authority figures, feelings of self-worth, and deviant and delinquent behavior. Significant differences were detected between the two groups. In addition, the study found significant differences between Catholic and Protestant respondents in the Northern Ireland group. In particular, East Belfast Protestants felt even more alienated than West Belfast Catholics. The author cautions that the recent successes in Northern Ireland toward a peaceful resolution of the troubles may be undermined if the State does not take immediate action to confront and attend to the causes of this disparity.

The final paper in this session considers the impact of war and political conflict on children's lives and the ways in which they makes sense of the unrest. The paper presents findings from an ethnographic study of young teenagers who have lived through the recent war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, on opposites sides of the conflict. In addition to qualitative observations, the study also collected data on three clinical scales administered to the youth. In the paper the author compares to narratives of two teenagers, one who scored low in a test of psychological adjustment, and the other who scored high.

While the devastating consequences are not in contention, the results highlight the unanticipated, potentially positive effects that may have been realized through one female's first-hand experience of the war. This young girl seemed to feel the most

composed when the war was at its peak, and more depressed during times of truce or a lull in the fighting. Through conversations with the youth, the author was able to explain these seemingly contradictory findings. The girl described a home environment that was dominated by an abusive father who also beat and verbally abused her mother. When war came and the fathers left to join the fighting, both mother and daughter felt much safer and were able to get on with their daily lives without the omnipresence of the threat of physical violence. Upon his return, the father would renew his hostilities and condemnations on both women. The author concluded that in many ways “the war to some degree actually protected (the respondent) her from abuse, increased bonding with her mother and her own sense of self efficacy.” In conclusion, the author challenged assumptions by policy makers and program developers that children interpret and react to situations in the same way that adults do, but suggested that the children’s own unique perspective is crucial to an accurate comprehension of how crises affect them and what kinds of interventions are best suited as palliatives.

Session Discussion -

The ensuing discussion focused on ways to better delineate and operationalize the micro, macro and meso-level factors that account for child well-being. While a great deal of attention has been devoted to the impact of the family structure on child outcomes and to a lesser extent on the relationship between community level variables (such as schooling, present of role models etc.,) a call was made for better understanding of the interconnectedness between all of these a priori indicators on children.

Well-being it was argued is a multifaceted construct and is best described as assessing how individuals relates to others and the social and economic environment in

which the live. A sense of purpose and participation in planning one's future is a critical set of dimensions of well-being. Therefore, it was argued that participation in program development and policy discussion which affect the lives of youth, is a valued activity that provides meaning and a sense of social responsibility for all.

Key Points -

- How can we better ensure that youth play a participatory role in program and policy development which impact their lives?
- To what extent will individual and national identities remain important in the face of increased immigration and unification trends worldwide? Will increased social and economic isolation of ethnic and racial groups increase hostilities and marginalization?

OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

Several common themes emerged from the international conference on Youth in Cities: Successful Mediators of Normative Development. Without oversimplifying many of the important messages that were communicated, there is clear consensus across almost all of the papers that one of the root causes of nonnormative development in youth is poverty – individual poverty, neighborhood poverty, or national poverty. Moreover, many of the important policy proposals formulated were based on an understanding of the processes of marginalization and impoverishment, and the link between the micro-, meso- and macro-structural constraints experienced by countries in the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

Underdeveloped and developing countries of the Southern hemisphere face enormous challenges, stemming in part from global economic restructuring, the outmigration of low-income families from rural or agricultural-based dwellings to urban areas, growing populations with a predominance of youth and an institutional framework that fails to meet the changing needs of indigenous peoples. In the North, global economic restructuring has also played a prominent role in the marginalization and social isolation of low-income families. The shift from manufacturing to a service-based economy and the increased emphasis on technology, have excluded large portions of the population from the labor force in these developed countries. Against this backdrop of social and economic dislocation, the conference sought to document and assess the conditions of youth and to examine intervention programs aimed at alleviating or negating the debilitating effects of poverty on this vulnerable group.

The policy recommendations that grew out of the proceedings suggest that there is no universally applicable approach to promoting the well-being of poor youth around the world. However, the clear message is that the sustained development of youth cannot be achieved without grappling with the economic deprivation of the entire population, in particular the parents of youth and children. Without viable opportunities to support and maintain a family, adults in underdeveloped countries often have to depend on the labor of children to supplement the household economy. Several papers distinguished between the role of youth as “willing” or “unwilling” workers. In some instances, forceful arguments were made for the important function child “workers” play in ensuring that their family members do not go without. This ability to stave off hardship and contribute to the financial situation of their families has been shown to increase esteem and even better prepare youth for the rigors of the labor market later on. On the other hand, child “laborers” represent an exploited group whose members are placed in abusive situations and, instead of reaping any sort of personal gain, are invariably damaged either physically or emotionally by the experience.

The challenge for all countries is to facilitate the job readiness of adults and to provide them with the skills to stay competitive in a changing labor market. This can be done through training, retraining, upgrading the skills of workers whose jobs have become obsolete or who make use of outmoded technology. Investing in comprehensive social services systems that provide important safety nets for adults, and therefore shield youth from the prospects of having to place themselves in dangerous or exploitative situations, should also be a priority for all countries. Finally, education, the building block upon which the successful development of children and youth is founded, needs to be at the

forefront of every national agenda to safeguard to lives of youth and prepare them to be engaged social actors and contributing members of a society.

Clearly, not all countries have the resources or organizational infrastructure in place to realize some or all of these goals in the immediate future. In some of these situations, grassroots organizations or the commitment of an individual or small group of dedicated workers provides marginalized youth with opportunities and choices necessary for successful development. Often these organizations or individuals rely on their own energies or resources to make a difference in the lives of youth. For many of these interventions, outreach in the form of a caring adult who can shield youth from the physical and emotional ravages of poverty is seen as a crucial first step in the battle against youth disenfranchisement. Successfully connecting with youth requires getting beyond stereotypical labels that stigmatize the group and further thwart efforts to reconcile youth with mainstream society. Labels such as “street kids” and “child prostitutes” are categorizing terms that unjustly stereotype youth as the protagonists of their own normlessness and absolve mainstream society of any culpability. Instead, by communicating a message of love, security and self-respect, these grassroots organizations have been able to make a difference.

Youth empowerment is also seen to be an effective tool in bringing about social changes. While many societies, especially thoses in the southern hemisphere, have cultural constraints that require youth to assume a passive or nonconfrontational role and therefore refrain from political or social mobilization, there are several clear examples of where youth-organized initiatives have had a profound effect on the overall well-being of a society. These initiatives might involve collective action at the national level in response

to inequalities and oppression, or at the local level where youth resolve to have a more pronounced impact on their immediate environment. Viewing youth as stakeholders in the outcomes that affect them was seen as a useful way to structure dialogue around the formulation of strategies that would have a long-term effect. This stakeholder-based approach recognizes the enormously important role youth can play in the promotion of prosocial development and the initiatives that are critical to making that happen.

So where should we direct our energies? Several key priority areas are common across all thematic sessions:

Differentiating Between Symptoms and Causes

The social and economic isolation of adults is inextricably linked to the destitution of youth. Research needs to continue to focus on understanding the underlying causal associations between the structural and situational effects of poverty on youth outcomes. The accumulation of negative life experiences throughout the developmental process has a profound effect on the prosocial adjustment of youth and can have detrimental results. In addition, the delimiting effects of concentrated poverty or growing up in areas that experience inordinately high rates of exclusion from the mainstream stymie aspirations and inculcate a sense of hopelessness among youth.

Understanding the Role of the State

How the state defines and perceives low-income groups is an important precursor to proposing economic or social interventions to alleviate their condition. The changing economic climate has further polarized the divide between the middle class and the poor, especially in developing and underdeveloped countries. The poor are increasingly omitted from political discourse simply because they do not have the financial resources to ensure

that their voices are heard. As a result, policies specifically targeting the poor are enacted without input from the poor themselves and often reflect the prejudicial sentiments of the powerful elite. The West is also criticized for keeping the poor out of politics, and the recent efforts of the U.S. to revamp its ailing welfare system is a compelling example of how punitive policies aimed at the “non-deserving” poor continue to dominate the debate.

Institutional Infrastructures

Providing for the needs of all its citizens is currently beyond the limited resources of many fledgling countries. Basic commodities such as food, shelter, and sanitation are necessary to ensure the physical health of all citizens. Therefore, nations must first attend to the task of establishing effective policies and actions that address the fundamental needs of everyone. This may involve tremendous amounts of outlay in terms of economic and human capital and may prevent some countries from diverting resources to focus on the needs of especially vulnerable members of the population like children and youth. However, once these essential elements are put in place, policies that ameliorate the daily travails of the poor need to be high on all countries’ national policy agendas. Increased employment opportunities for the unskilled and semi-skilled and the redistribution of wealth are seen as important first steps in implementing effective institutional support for alleviating poverty. However, some states have neither the knowledge, capacity nor the willingness to take these proactive measures. Indeed, in some instances it is the misdirected and often illegitimate practices of the state itself that are the root causes of inequality. Wherever possible, increased pressure should be brought to bear on iniquitous states whose practices promote greater inequality and exclusion.

Where states lack the institutional know-how to formulate comprehensive strategies to combat poverty, the discussion needs to focus on how to provide informed, culturally-sensitive, expert advice to policy makers which would allow them to establish a supportive infrastructure that meets the needs of the poor. One of the most important areas to emphasize is the availability and accessibility of quality education for all. Recognizing that schools play an important role in the cultural and social development of children, administrators need to find useful ways to allow children the opportunity to learn while still being able to provide economic assistance to family members. Especially in developing countries, innovative approaches need to be proposed that will allow children the flexibility to remain productive members of a household, village or community, while still being able to take advantage of a formal education.

Responsive and Supportive Attachments

The emotional and social supports of strong kinship networks are paramount to the normal development of youth. Every effort should be made to solidify this connection and help maintain it throughout the life course. However, in instances where these networks are either nonsupportive or damaging, or indeed where they are nonexistent (such as when parents die), the attachment of a responsible caring adult is crucial for helping youth succeed. Fostering program interventions that provide for the stabilizing influence of benevolent adults in programmatic settings sheltering at-risk youth from the dangers of the “street” is an important step toward meeting the health and development needs of youth.

Evaluation of Intervention Strategies

While no cookbook method is available for delineating all of the components of interventions that successfully mediate the pernicious effects of poverty on youth, well-formulated evaluation designs are useful for program development and understanding of the problem *in situ*. The consensus at the conference was that many programs have had a dramatic impact on the healthy development of youth, but often people are unable to demonstrate how a program had a desired effect, or what components of the treatment modality were critical to the process. This can make the problem of replication and generalizability enormously difficult. In some instances, the important ingredient of a successful program was the involvement of a charismatic or caring individual who could connect with marginalized youth. In other instances, success was attained through coalitions of caring organizations that were able to combine efforts to address problems that were highly interrelated and together contributed to the maladjustment of youth. Evaluation designs should be sensitive enough to the complexities of the problem and sophisticated enough to be able to address both the intended and unintended consequences of an intervention. Even the best-intentioned programs can exacerbate an already onerous situation if efforts are misdirected, however well intended. The provision of toilet facilities for female workers in villages in India was highlighted as a case in point. Program developers proposed building enclosed facilities for field workers which would be erected close to their work site and therefore would allow them easy access and more privacy than they had up to that point. However, program developers confronted a great deal of hostility from the very people who were thought to benefit from the proposed buildings. Workers saw the toilets as an imposition and impeded on the time they could “escape” from their chores to go off by themselves to secluded places outdoors and away from the

work site. Similarly, policies such as the global eradication of child labor begs the question of what will happen to the children and the families they support if no alternative means of economic support exists? The unintended and potentially disastrous consequences of programs or policies directed at perceived problems underscores the important role that youth play in helping to develop, implement and monitor programs and policies that seek to better their condition.

Youth as Stakeholders

There was a clear consensus that youth should be afforded a more prominent role in improving the quality, applicability and scope of policies and programs that affect their lives. However, the mechanism through which this could be realized remains unresolved. While it is recognized that youth are quite resilient and often are able to withstand an enormous amount of adversity in becoming productive members of the social fabric, the challenge remains as to how much emphasis should be placed on the participation of youth in the policy debate. Many of the causes of poverty are complex and exist at a level that may be beyond the abilities of youth to comprehend, let alone propose solutions. Malperforming or nonexistent institutional supports such as a quality educational system may put youth, especially low-income youth, at an early disadvantage and therefore lessen the degree to which they can adequately comprehend the array of economic and social forces that dominate their lives. However, valid arguments were proposed for involving all youth in helping to develop points of entry that will accentuate program success and better enable researchers to propose problem-solving interventions.

Gender Differences

One reason why universalistic approaches are not so readily available is because poverty affects youth in different ways depending on gender, family structure, positioning in the life course, and a host of other coexisting factors. However, gender differences was a dominant issue in the conference discussions. Boys and girls are often affected differentially by poverty and disadvantage and are victimized or exploited by disparate forces. The ravages of war have had an enormous impact on the number of boys that

populate towns and villages around the world. Boys are either conscripted into the armed forces or are some of the first victims of warring factions. Girls are more often the victims of sexual violence and are more likely to be exposed to sexual disease and impregnation.

Faced with the need to support oneself or other family members who are unable to find work, boys and girls are often expected to assume the responsibility of primary provider for themselves and their families. When conventional methods of employment are unavailable, youth often resort to illegal activities. Boys are more likely to engage in property crimes, including theft or larceny, and in some instances, prostitution. Girls are also likely to engage in pilfering when no other viable legitimate means are open to them, but all too often they are forced to sell themselves in order to earn a living.

Emerging or Under-Emphasized Problems

Several papers touched on problems that are under research or are only now coming to the attention of the international community. Two such problems that require immediate attention are the growing number of orphans that populate countries where armed conflicts are ongoing and the escalating number of youth with AIDS or HIV.

Next Steps

The conference touched on many issues that are common across all the countries represented at the conference. Two of the main reasons for convening such a diverse group of researchers and practitioners was to highlight the complexities of the problem and help craft multidimensional approaches to the alleviation of poverty in urban areas.

The fundamental message that resonated with all attendees was that urgent action is needed to curb the escalating problem of disadvantage and its attendant maladies. Delineating the complexities of the problem was seen as an important first step in creating an action-agenda for change. Understanding country-specific priorities in the measurement, documentation and alleviation of poverty and an assessment of the political, social and economic climate help to gauge the extent to which a top down approach is feasible and appropriate. Next, a community approach to establishing supportive networks for youth development requires an awareness of the kinds of social capital that are available and the degree to which the community is tied to national economic conditions. Communities that are socially and economically cut off or isolated are unlikely to benefit from development or revitalization initiatives at the national level. Therefore, it is imperative that steps be taken to ensure that these localities gain the political and social capital necessary to take advantage of opportunities for progress. In situations where national initiatives are lacking, awareness of economic and social constraints at the community level provide program planners with an inventory of available support networks that can make a difference in the lives of youth. Mobilizing the collective energies of dedicated groups and individuals including residents, faith-based organizations, and others in the private and public sector can bring about supportive partnerships so that limited resources can be collectively marshaled to make a difference in the lives of youth. Family- and kin-connected networks play a critical role in the monitoring, socialization, and normative development of youth and are the first line of defense against external sources of maladaptation. Above all else, the essential elements of the familial bond need to be protected and sustained in spite of external economic pressures. Interventions aimed at

the entire family, including parents and adult members, forestall the “adultification” of children and instead allow them the opportunity to acquire a formal education in preparation for a more secure place in the labor market, thereby helping to curb the cycle of poverty and inequality. Finally, when all other support mechanisms fail, or when social forces are such that children become the unwitting victims of war, family dissolution, or community dislocation, individualized and targeted interventions aimed at stabilizing and reconnecting the child with mainstream society are imperative. While resilient, youth who experience emotional or physical punishment associated with the mental or physical abuse of self or a loved one require a great deal of caring and well-intentioned support to affect a positive change in their lives.