



**Global Economic Development:
Context of Russian-Ukrainian War**

Igor MANTSUROV,
Nancy STIEGLER,
Yana KHRAPUNOVA,
Alina BARVINOK

**THE ROLE OF YOUTH
IN THE WORLD'S DEVELOPMENT
AND POST-WAR REHABILITATION
PROGRAMS IN UKRAINE**

Abstract

The article contains results of the scientific study of the research in several post-war and post-conflicts countries performed by an international team. It is devoted to the generalization of the youth policy experience in terms of solutions

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Mantsurov, Igor G., Doctor of Sciences in Economics, Professor, Director of the Research Institute for System Statistical Studies, Kyiv, Ukraine; Extraordinary Professor of the Department of Statistics and Demographic Studies at the University of the Western Cape in the Republic of South Africa. ORCID: 0000-0003-1753-0422 Email: imantsurov@gmail.com

Stiegler, Nancy, Doctor of Sciences in Demography, Professor, Head of the Department of Statistics and Demographic Studies, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South-Africa. ORCID: 0000-0003-1107-5166 Email: nstiegler@uwc.ac.za

Khrapunova, Yana V., PhD in Economics, Leading Researcher, Research Institute for System Statistical Studies, Kyiv, Ukraine. ORCID: 0000-0002-6311-3235 Email: yakhrapunova@gmail.com

Barvinok, Alina S., PhD in Economics, Researcher of the Department of Statistics and Demographic Studies at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. ORCID: 0000-0002-8047-3478 Email: alinabarvinok1990@gmail.com

to economic and social problems provoked by war conflicts. Adolescents and youth, as a subject of study, in such a post-war situation are considered as important agents and actors in this process. Many young people are not only among the most vulnerable groups affected by armed conflict, poverty, unemployment, they are also the generation that will reach adulthood during the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda. In addition to the sustainable development goals, policymakers must not neglect to prioritize the needs of young people and make room for them to carry the next development agenda forward. Young people should be involved in all aspects of the process. Only through meaningful representation by and collaboration with youth will it be possible to move away from an entrenched mindset of delivering basic services to youth towards an approach that empowers young people and enables them to realize their potential with special attention to the conditions of countries that suffered from the armed conflicts. The article offers a number of recommendations on improvement and development of the youth policy in Ukraine as a country that was subjected to a brutal attack by the Russian army, an occupation of part of its territory, destruction of the economic and social infrastructure, emergence of a large number of refugees and internally displaced persons, primarily those young and economically active. This paper is addressed to demographers, economists, sociologists and experts in state administration and social policy.

Key Words:

youth concept; youth bulge; demographic dividend; sustainable development; national economic and social policy; post-war and post-conflict rehabilitation.

JEL: J13, I38, H56, Q56.

19 references.

Problem Statement and Methodology

Relevance of research. Social and economic development of the contemporary world in general and post-war rehabilitation of Ukraine in particular will not be possible without the efforts and attention being centered on problems of youth as the guarantor of social and economic progress. It is an absolute truth that further development of the existing society to the highest possible extent depends on whether appropriate starting conditions are ensured for life of young generations.

Adolescents and youth in such a situation are considered as important agents, actors and, simultaneously, beneficiaries in this process: many young people are not only among the most vulnerable groups affected by poverty, inequality, unemployment and climate change, they are also the generation that will reach adulthood during the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda unanimously adopted by the 193 member states of the United Nations on 25 September 2015.

Although this idea was conceptually well-formulated and is relatively well-realized, the majority of countries entered the new millennium with a significant burden of unsolved youth problems, a range of which, for example, youth inequality, unemployment and marginalization of youth, spread of illegal social practices and asocial manifestations in the youth environment, youth health problems and some marriage and family problems etc., currently demonstrate a trend towards aggravation.

In the situation of deep economic and demographic crisis and, first of all, crisis provoked by the armed conflict as is happening in Ukraine, is observed in developed as well as in developing countries. Today youth problems in different spheres of life develop some specific features and are characterized by severe and long-term consequences and, therefore, require thorough analysis and regulation, as well as development of a realistic, well-balanced and weighted policy in respect of young generations.

In this paper, youth is researched as a phenomenon as well as a social and demographic population group marked out by age characteristics (15-34 years old) and social status peculiarities. This article will shed light on the policy space for transformative change by analyzing a range of relevant factors which present both challenges and opportunities for fostering the rights and role of youth in the process of the world development and, particularly, in armed conflicts, which are happening in several countries, including Ukraine.

It is very important to note that all of the issues mentioned above are considered in the framework and through the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030. The article then applies the framework to a

selection of policy areas that are of high relevance for young people development, such as social, economic and welfare policy, assessing necessary means of implementation such as resource mobilization and governance systems and looking at social and economic impacts in a cross-cutting way.

The aim of the article is to stretch boundaries and invite new thinking on how to grasp the numerous opportunities offered by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 Agenda to approach development challenges holistically and from a youth-centered perspective in general and in the armed conflict countries, in particular. This involves integrating economic and social dimensions of development and fostering cross-sectoral approaches, particularly in those countries that are suffering from the serious armed conflicts or/and post-war countries.

The new agenda has, in many ways, turned the traditional development approach upside down: it is no longer an agenda for the developing countries, but rather a universal program that needs to be implemented in all countries, including those that funded and implemented agendas in the conditions of armed conflicts or post-war rehabilitation. This new agenda is equally challenging but also promising for traditional aid actors that have designed and delivered programmes for specific groups, such as adolescents and youth. So, in terms of scientific methodology, this population group represents **the object of the study**. They are now required to stretch the boundaries of their work and to pay greater attention to the interlinkages between different territories, sectors, population groups and policy areas.

Taking this into consideration, the authors would like to turn the readers' attention to two main bullet points, namely: (a) the role of youth in the world development in the framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030 and (b) particulars of youth role and importance in the conditions of armed conflict and post-war programming.

This not only creates more complexity but also offers more, and more effective, entry points for interventions and advocacy. The holistic and universal vision of the 2030 Agenda, along with its comprehensive set of goals and targets – the SDG – is therefore an important step forward, but also a challenge. To create the sustainable long-term change ambitiously laid out in Agenda 2030, new approaches to policy must be implemented – approaches that target «the underlying generative framework» of social injustice as opposed to implementing «affirmative remedies», which simply seek to alleviate the symptoms.

Based on this definition, we understand transformative change as a process that attacks the root causes of poverty, inequality and unsustainable practices through integrated and synergistic policies and reforms with the aim of achieving sustainable development goals. The way in which the authors conceptualize youth issues and their role in the world society in general and Ukraine in particular, is key to the formation of transformative policies.

First of all, according to the authors' point of view, these policies address **young people not as a set group of individuals between the ages of 15 and 34 alive at the present moment, but rather as a dynamic category that individuals enter and leave**. A transformative policy approach seeks to impact youth both today and as future adults, as well as future generations of young people. In the Ukrainian case this generation of people will be heavily involved in the country's rehabilitation process. Further, a transformative approach is built on an integrated vision of society that views youth as actors who impact and are impacted by the various relational spheres in which they exist – their families and households, communities, cities, homes, and environments, both built and natural. These considerations have significant implications for the ways policies are formulated and directed towards youth.

In policy contexts of a specific country like Ukraine, for example, it is necessary to look at transformative change both in terms of processes and outcomes. In terms of processes, a key issue would be whether youth's voices and their specific needs are respected in policy design and implementation, including in the evaluation and monitoring of policies and institutions. In terms of outcomes, transformative change would reflect the best interests of youth and foster their long-term capabilities and potential to contribute in turn to such processes of transformative change.

This study presents a hierarchical view of the numerous ways in which young people may contribute to sustainable development.

It is also very important to give recommendations on how to turn youth into a **demographic dividend** within the framework of an objectively operating process of demographic transition. It should be noted that this is a very difficult task, which not all countries have successfully and effectively managed to solve. The authors would like to add that not in all, even very developed countries, the youth has become the most efficient and highly productive working group of the population that ensures sustainable technological, economic and social development of these countries. Moreover, in a number of countries the **youth bulge** did not lead to an acceleration of development, but, on the contrary, it resulted in the formation and accumulation of a number of economic and social problems.

The task of the authors is to ensure that the article prepared by them contributes precisely to the formation of institutional, legal, economic and organizational conditions, thanks to the implementation of which the youth of Ukraine will become the most powerful productive force in the country, so that the effect of the demographic dividend will bring real results expressed as a percentage GDP growth, the formation of a high-tech economy, and progressive structure of society.

The main conceptual idea of the article and its theoretical and organizational message to society, governments of all countries and Ukraine, in particular, is that the authors decided to analyze the deep semantic connection and mutual

subordination of such concepts as «demographic transition», «youth bulge» and «demographic dividend». As a result of their theoretical considerations, the authors prove that the root cause of these phenomena is the objective process of demographic transition, which occurs sooner or later in all countries due to their economic and social development (World Health Organization, 2015).

Demographic transition is a process of transformation of a society with a low level of technological, economic and social development, which is objectively immanent in high levels of fertility and mortality, into a fundamentally different type of social order with advanced technologies, high levels of education and socio-economic development. As we know, low birth and death rates objectively correspond to such a type of society. Although this shift has occurred in a great majority of industrialized countries, theory and model are often inaccurate in individual cases due to specific social, political and economic factors that affect the demographic behavior of certain population groups.

However, the existence of some kind of demographic transition is widely recognized in the social sciences due to the well-established reversal correlation linking the decline in fertility with social and economic development. As a result of this transition from a demographic situation with high births and high deaths to a situation with low births and deaths, each country finds itself in a situation where the number of young people increases dramatically, that is, a period of youth boom, or, as it is called, a «youth bulge». This period is passed by all countries without exception.

Another thing is that the demographic bulge does not entail a demographic dividend in all countries. The benefits obtained from a demographic transition are neither automatic nor guaranteed. Any demographic dividend depends on whether the government implements the right policies in areas such as education, health, governance, and the economy. In addition, the amount of demographic dividend that a country receives depends on the level of productivity of young adults which, in turn, depends on the level of schooling, employment practices in a country, timing, and frequency of childbearing, as well as economic policies that make it easier for young parents to work. The dividend amount is also tied to the productivity of older adults which depends on tax incentives, health programs, and pension and retirement policies.

The scientific novelty of this article lies in the untraditional definition of the «youth» concept. For the first time in scientific literature, two approaches are combined to define the «youth» concept – categorical and relational. Youth is also understood in the framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda and global PYD model. Moreover, the paper defines a hierarchical view of the numerous ways in which young people may contribute to sustainable development in the framework of demographic dividend and identifies the role and importance of youth in the conditions of armed conflict, development and implementation of post-war programs.

The practical value and significance of the article is that it forms an analytical basis for the design and implementation of specific governmental programs dedicated to the youth development in Ukraine during the process of post-war rehabilitation process. Taking this into consideration, the article should prove a significant contribution to accelerating the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals and national programs of the post-war rehabilitation process in Ukraine.

Literature Review and Analysis of Scientific Conceptions of Youth

Our discussion of the concept of youth would be incomplete without a consideration of the popular contributions provided by known researchers. As we can see, adolescents and young people in the developed world have been the subjects of an enormous amount of research over the last 40 years.

In general, this research assumes that young people constitute a separate and significant category of people as *non-adults*. A central and recurring theme in the studies is the problematic nature of being a young person and the even more problematic nature of becoming adult. Much of the literature about youth has inherited assumptions from developmental psychology about universal stages of development, identity formation, normative behavior and the relationship between social and physical maturation. Yet very little work has been done to clarify the theoretical basis of this categorization based on age.

Taking this into consideration, the authors would like to discuss the use and usefulness of the *Concept of Youth*. In our understanding, it makes sense to first of all determine the ways in which young people have been conceptualized, examining common assumptions about what growing up means. And after that offer a perspective on the concept of youth as a *social process*. So, it is very important to study young people because they are embarking on a process involving transitions in many dimensions of life, towards becoming adult and establishing a livelihood.

Authors would characterize approaches to youth which are based primarily on age groupings as *philosophically categorical*. The concept of youth epitomizes this approach, because it assumes the existence of essential characteristics in young people because of their age, focusing on the assumed link between physical growth and social identity. One of the limitations of taking a categorical approach to the study of youth is the ahistorical and static nature of it. The assumption that age is the central feature characterizing young people gives insufficient weight to difference, process and change. A categorical approach tends to rest on the assumption that the similarities amongst the age category are more

significant than the differences, taking masculine, white, middle class experience as the norm. It offers little grasp of the ways in which the experience of growing up is a process negotiated by young people as well as being imposed on them.

Authors would like to emphasize that a period of transition to adulthood, has meaning *only in relation to the specific circumstances* of social, political and economic conditions. Once this is understood, it is possible to bring social conditions to the foreground and examine the significant differences between groups of young people as they engage with the processes which will take them closer to adult life. Inevitably, viewing youth as a social process raises questions about the meaning of «adult» status. For the concept of youth to have meaning its end point – adulthood – also has to have a clear meaning. (Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), 2007)

Taking this ideology into account, the authors understand youth as the relational concept. The concept of youth, as idealized and institutionalized (for example in education systems and welfare organizations in industrialized countries) supposes eventual arrival at the status of adulthood. If youth is a state of becoming, adulthood is the arrival (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1997). Understanding youth as a relational concept brings power relations to the forefront. For the purposes of our analysis, this is an important dimension in understanding the experiences that different groups of young people have of growing up. The popular image of young people presenting a threat to law and order represents young people as more powerful than they really are. Although young people have rights as young citizens, these are relatively easily denied, and they have very little say in the institutions in which they have the most at stake, such as education.

Summarizing, it is necessary to emphasize that the concept of youth can be defined as all the people within a specific age group, or as a state of being or even a state of mind.

In a brief and the following UN classification, youth is defined as the people between ages 15 and 34. This covers a wide range of experiences and transitions that includes an early phase (between ages 15 and 19), a middle phase (between 20 and 24), and a later phase (between 25 and 29) and transition to adulthood (30–34) (Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2008).

Young people in all four age groups face major events that affect their future well-being. At the younger end of the age spectrum, youth are still children in many respects. By the time they reach the middle phase, youth are transitioning from puberty to maturity; this group can be considered adolescents. By the time a person finishes this stage of life, they have set in motion many of the events that will determine their life path. All of these phases form the experience of being a youth, but the youth experience varies significantly by age group. The share of young people in the world's population has already peaked and will diminish globally and in each region of the world between 2000 and now.

Research Results

On 25 September 2015, the 193 member states of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that provide the framework for global development over the next 15 years. The SDGs aim to be inclusive, transformative and global; appropriate for developed and developing countries alike. Importantly, the goals have been created through an inclusive and participatory process, aiming to ensure the voices of individuals, including young ones, and communities at all levels of society are considered.

Sustainable Development Goals is a set of 17 goals aiming to transform the global World by 2030. These goals present the shared vision to end poverty, rescue the planet and build a peaceful world, and they are gaining global momentum. (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2018). It is very important to note that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a new opportunity to address the key development challenges of our time with the aim to improve the well-being and rights of all people, including the youth. In this process the active engagement of youth in sustainable development efforts is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies by the target date, and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development, including the impacts of climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict, and migration.

Calls for investments in young people have increased dramatically in recent years. Meanwhile, more and more countries agree that policies that help young people fulfil their potential can also help drive economic development. Strategic investments can allow young people to claim their rights – to education, health, employment, development, and to live free from violence and discrimination. Realizing these changes will require that young people are counted and have a voice – meaningful participation – in governance and policymaking.

With the right policies and investments, countries can realize a «demographic dividend», made possible by falling mortality and fertility rates. With a larger working population and fewer dependents, a country has a one-time opportunity for rapid economic growth and stability. To realize this dividend, investments are needed to build institutional capacity, strengthen human capital, pursue economic models that improve employment prospects, and promote inclusive governance and the enjoyment of human rights. International support can unlock the potential of the next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs, change agents and leaders.

Youth bulge and demographic dividend as the organic part of the youth general concept

The achievement of SDGs is influenced by such population dynamics as growth, fertility and mortality levels, age structure, and rural-urban distribution.

One of the most important consequences of the demographic transition that is occurring in many low and middle income countries is the increasing concentration of population in the productive ages, particularly the 15-34 age groups (DESA, 2005).

The process of this very fast increasing concentration of youth in the population structure by age is called «youth bulge» (from demographic theory to the conceptual point of view of «Seeing Youth», bulge refers to a demographic pattern where a large share of the population is comprised of children and young adults). It is a critical philosophical concept in thinking about the future as understanding age-cohorts can help us understand emerging patterns. Age-cohorts experience a shared reality based on the economic and political conditions they have grown up in; for example, if they grow in the context of job or resource scarcity. The youth bulge, however, is not just a demographic trend, but part of an alternative way of seeing the future – that of the view of young people, their changing needs, their use of new technologies and their views of the future.

Dividing the whole world into more and less developed groups of countries (following the UN definitions) reveals a large difference in the age distribution of the population. The youth bulge is a common phenomenon in many developing countries, and in particular, in the least developed countries. It is often due to a stage of development where a country achieves success in reducing infant mortality but mothers still have a high fertility rate. The result is that a large share of the population is comprised of children and young adults, and today's children are tomorrow's young adults (DESA, 1984).

As a result, the youth bulge will become a demographic dividend or, in other words, a window of opportunity brought about by falling fertility and mortality rates. It presents potential for governments to reap the benefits of having a growing segment of working-age adults relative to the dependent population. However, if a large cohort of young people cannot find employment and earn satisfactory income, the **youth bulge will become a «demographic bomb»**, because a large mass of frustrated youth is likely to become a potential source of social and political instability. Therefore, one basic measure of a country's success in turning the youth bulge into a demographic dividend is the youth employment rate, or conversely, unemployment rate.

To materialize this potential, more investment in education, entry level employment, delaying family formation, and reproductive and related health care for young people is needed. However, the demographic bonus will have a positive effect on opportunities for savings and economic growth in aggregate terms, provided the economically productive population is effectively employed. It is likely to create adverse effects for young people, who will face greater obstacles for entry into an already crowded labor market, especially if they are not equipped with skills required by a competitive labor market.

The demographic dividend is defined as the accelerated economic growth that may result from a rapid decline in a country's fertility and the subsequent change in the population age structure. With fewer births each year, a country's working-age population grows larger in relation to the young dependent population. With more people in the labor force and fewer young people to support, a country has a window of opportunity for rapid economic growth if the right social and economic investments and policies are made in health, education, governance, and the economy. Investments in today's youth population can position a country to achieve a demographic dividend, but the gains are neither automatic nor guaranteed (DESA, 2003).

Investing in health, education, and job creation fosters opportunities for developing a skilled and healthy labor force, developing the potential of youth for a demographic dividend. All these investments are necessary to harness the potential of young Ukrainian people for social and economic development – fostering increased prosperity for the country. They pay off in improving the health and well-being of current populations, and they help position countries to achieve the accelerated economic growth resulting from a demographic dividend. Demographic dividends are occurrences in the whole world and in Ukraine, in particular, that enjoys accelerated economic growth that stems from the decline in fertility and mortality rates.

Taking into consideration everything mentioned above, the authors of this article took the liberty of formulating one very deep conceptual idea, according to which SDGs 2030 Agenda is a framework where the global process of demographic transition should be considered as the basis for the formation of a demographic dividend.

In addition, the amount of demographic dividend that a country receives depends on the level of productivity of young adults which, in turn, depends on the level of schooling, employment practices in a country, timing, and frequency of childbearing, as well as economic policies that make it easier for young parents to work. The dividend amount is also tied to the productivity of older adults which depends on tax incentives, health programs, and pension and retirement policies (Statistics Division, 2008). Provided with the necessary skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential, young people can be a driving force for supporting development and contributing to peace and security as well as to the development and implementation of post-war rehabilitation programs in Ukraine.

State of the world's youth

The 2030 Agenda clearly applies to all of the world's 2 billion young people aged 15-34, who currently make up 25 per cent of the global population. The youth population is projected to peak at 2.2 billion in 2030. The size of the youth population matters greatly in the context of sustainable development. The age structure of a population and the relative size of the youth cohort are important

because they serve as determining factors in the growth of the labor force and pressures on the total population.

As youth are increasingly demanding more just, equitable and progressive opportunities and solutions in their societies, the need to address the multifaceted challenges faced by young people (such as access to education, health, employment and gender equality) have become more pressing than ever. Youth can be a positive force for development when provided with the knowledge and opportunities they need to thrive. In particular, young people should acquire the education and skills needed to contribute in a productive economy; and they need access to a job market that can absorb them into the labor force.

The United Nations youth agenda is guided by the World Programme of Action for Youth. The Programme of Action covers fifteen youth priority areas and contains proposals for action in each of these areas, which provides a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people around the world.

It is axiomatic to posit that there is a linkage between youth and national development. This intercourse is not only symbiotically connected – one depends on the other for its sustenance. Therefore, the impact of youth on national development cannot be overestimated. The wheel of development of any country lies on the shoulders of youthful populations and how productive and creative they are. The youth in any society are the engine of growth and development because they provide the labor force for production of goods and services.

In the post-conflict population, youth constitute a reservoir brimming with potential energy, ready to be channeled for good or ill. What causes some young people to return to the life of a fighter while others choose to work for a better future? And what can domestic and international actors do to help youth move toward education, work to support their families, and becoming active contributors to building peace and reconstructing their countries? The UN World Population Prospects statistics estimate that there are 2 billion 15-34-year-olds in the world and nearly one billion live in developing countries where conflict is more likely to have taken place now. In such demographic realities, the potential youths hold for change and positive action is the subject of growing research agenda, and this is particularly the case with the recent wave of social upheavals and humanitarian crises in different parts of the world.

For much of human social interaction, the category of youth has been perceived as a historically constructed social category, a relational concept, and as a group of actors that is far from homogenous. A myriad of factors makes childhood and youth highly heterogeneous categories in terms of gender, class, race, ethnicity, political position as well as age. They also have multi-faceted roles. Youths can be heroes as well as victims, saviors and courageous in the midst of crisis, as well as criminals in the shantytowns and military entrepreneurs in the

war zones. Yet, as a category, youth are often approached as a fixed group or demographic cohort.

Youth and armed conflicts

Youths as a significant part of the society are frequently «bothered» in the discourse on conflict. They are seen as potentially dangerous subjects and policy approaches often regard them as a problem. Often, male youths in the age group of 15 to 35 have been observed as the main protagonists of war conflicts. In other words, much of contemporary thinking on youth and conflict tends to be overly negative. It focuses on the dangers posed by disaffected youths as is evident in the negative connotations of the «youth bulge» or «at risk youth» concepts.

A number of dangerous assumptions about the role, position, and contribution of youths appear to plague thinking among national and international elites driving recovery efforts within societies in transition, particularly in Ukraine. The majority of national and international policy pronouncements or security-related programmes in post-conflict and fragile contexts reflect a polarized discourse. The young vacillate between the two extremes of infantilizing and demonizing. On the one hand, youths are viewed as vulnerable, powerless and in need of protection. On the other, they are feared as dangerous, violent, apathetic and as threats to security. Youths are subjected to stereotypical images of being killed, angry and violent and as threat, especially those who participated in armed conflict as combatants. For instance, among the soldiers and combatants in the current Ukrainian war against Russian invasion there are about 55% of young people aged 18-35.

However, recent literature on youth in the war and post-conflict societies marks a shift in thinking about youth. Young people in Ukraine are under the special attention of the government during the current war. This underlines the different Ukrainian Ministries' perspective and acknowledges the importance of making the connection between youth and peace-enforcement, peacekeeping and peacebuilding for transforming a predominantly negative discourse on the role of youths in societies recovering from conflict. Taking this into consideration, the authors would like to pay attention to the following points.

The positioning of youth in society has a bearing on their leadership potential and their possible role in peacebuilding. The tension between young and old has been one of the key features of inter-generational shifts pertaining to the control over power, resources and people.

This tension lies in the palpable impatience of youth, their desire to strive for more, their willingness to be seen as responsible and capable, and the structural barriers to their social mobility. Independence from others and responsibility for others, such as taking care of a family or household, can be seen as defining markers of pre-requisites of social adulthood. In this sense, dependency, exclu-

sion, and social or political marginalization become prominent sources of social contest. At the same time, it should be recognized that such societal dynamics, challenges and opportunities vary across different cultural contexts. Within the challenging fluidity of post-conflict environments, which are nothing but contexts where the politics of war continue through different means, the young would need to show great navigational skills in order to respond to such power dynamics. Their social, political and economic navigation is about their identity transformation as well as the negotiation or re-negotiation of societal norms, values and structures so that they can find a voice and place in the emerging structures of post-conflict environments.

What needs to be underlined is that youth should be conceptualized and studied as agents of positive peace in terms of addressing not only the challenges of physical violence, but also the challenges of structural and cultural violence, and the broader social change processes to transform violent, oppressive and hierarchical structures, as well as behavior, relationships and attitudes into more participatory and inclusive ones. The key point to remember is that without recognizing youths as political actors, their trajectories in peacebuilding would likely be ignored, wasted and at best, under-utilized. To recognize their agency as a political actor in peacebuilding, there needs to be a comprehensive understanding of their conflict trajectories, and this is particularly important for those young people who have taken direct participation in an armed conflict as combatants.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To understand the engagement of youth in peacebuilding, first of all, the youth mobilization and reintegration factors such as who they are, what they did before the conflict, how they were recruited, what specific fighting roles they undertook, what they experienced physically, socio-economically and psychologically, during the armed conflict, and what 'home' context they will be reintegrating into will all be critical for the youth's trajectories in peacebuilding.

Second, the involvement of youth in non-violent politics, and from a wider perspective, the enablement of their political agency in a more positive and peace-oriented role in post-conflict environments, is likely to depend on how these trajectories are shaped by the overall political and governance context.

Third, the enablement of youth as an active agent in peacebuilding cannot be considered without considering the challenges they tend to face due to the armed conflict such as the loss of education, a lack of employable skills and the destruction of a stable family environment. The wider socio-economic needs of

youths are often ignored in post-conflict contexts as they are not seen as a vulnerable group.

Fourth, it is important to provide youths with training opportunities to take an active part in peacebuilding. With their youthful energy and capabilities, and ability of adaptation to new technological trends, for example, youths could act as mediators, community mobilisers, humanitarian workers and peace brokers. Like any particular conflict-affected population group, the mobilization of youths' capacities requires a targeted and long-term approach.

Fifth, the engagement of youth in peacebuilding in a wider perspective can be ensured through the arts, culture, tourism, sports and education. The innovativeness and creativeness of young people in those areas could be mobilized effectively by connecting them with wider peacebuilding objectives such as building bridges between divided communities and ensuring a viable process of reconciliation.

Finally, in undertaking all of these objectives it is also pivotal to avoid the well-known cliché of referring to youths as the «future leaders». Leadership should not be considered as a factor of age and providing appropriate governance contexts would likely enable young people to flourish as leaders today. In other words, they need to be treated as leaders today without postponing it to an elusive future whether it is in governance in general or peacebuilding programmes specifically.

To achieve this objective there have recently been a number of critical developments such as the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security of December 2015 which makes a clear recognition of positive contributions of youth to peace and sets an overall framework to support their efforts. In May 2016, the UN Peacebuilding Fund started its first Youth Promotion Initiative, which could play a key role in encouraging youth leadership in peacebuilding. Therefore, the current trends show that there will be many more similar youth leadership programmes across the world in the near future, but the key point for their successes will depend on whether or not such initiatives can also respond to wider socio-economic, cultural and political barriers that young people face in their quest of becoming an active agent of positive change, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Peacebuilding and reconciliation both work to reduce the risk of relapse into violent conflict by helping create sustainable peace within a society. Peacebuilding activities create «peace dividends», which are tangible results for the affected community that can be directly tied either to the absence of conflict or to the peacebuilding process. Peacebuilding and reconciliation strategies should be comprehensive and closely correlated to the particular needs of the conflict or area. It is essential that priorities be set by the affected communities, rather than by international actors.

In addition, since conflicts often affect women differently, as in many cases women often have fewer resources to protect themselves, make up the majority of displaced and refugee populations, and are targeted by certain war tactics such as sexual violence, women's participation at all stages of a peace process is vital to achieving and sustaining peace. Everyone – not just the government or international organizations – can contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation

The Ukrainian Government, i.e., the Office of the Vice Prime Minister and other Ministries/agencies have begun coordinating efforts to improve local governance alongside peacebuilding and recovery initiatives. Both the national and subnational governments should work with local authorities, civil society and private sector organizations, youth, women, and marginalized groups.

Even before the «Big War» (February 24, 2022) has started, in April 2016, a new ministry was created that would oversee conflict-affected and displaced communities – the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons. One of its core mandates is the promotion of peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In June 2016, the Ukrainian Parliament passed a series of reforms of the judicial system aimed at improving appointments and assessments of judges as well as the structure of the courts system. The government has also supported the expansion of legal aid centers to provide free legal assistance throughout Ukraine.

In March 2022, immediately after the «Big War» has started, the Government has recognized the need to include the youth in peacebuilding efforts, aiming to have a certain percentage of young people participating in peacekeeping operations, negotiations, administrative bodies, and the security sector. These activities include initiatives to build dialogue, promote good governance and empower conflict-affected communities. There is also an ongoing support for decentralization and strengthening local governance. A comprehensive support programme to the government for implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda includes integration of youth aspects, gender-sensitivity and responsiveness to security reform, defense reform, and mediation.

An economic and social recovery project to increase employment and rebuild infrastructure in the Ukrainian regions is also underway. Organizations are providing support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, conducting trainings on trauma and post-trauma disorders, and undertaking other assistance programs for IDPs, former combatants, and conflict-affected communities. Several Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), aimed at strengthening peaceful relationships between IDPs and host communities, have been completed with significant help of the Ukrainian youth.

Despite the limited space for humanitarian activities in the Non-Government Controlled Areas (NGCA), a number of organizations continue, youth in particular, to provide support to displaced persons, returnees and affected populations, including young people aged 15-34, through the establish-

ment of community centers and livelihood programs. Monitoring, reporting and advocacy on the human rights situation in Ukraine, with a focus on the East, but not only, supports long-term reconciliation processes. Several civil society institutions have also conducted surveys regarding national dialogue and attitudes in Ukraine. They have published recommendations for state policy, including building consensus on future development, drafting state policy on national unity, prioritizing decentralization alongside reintegration of NGCAs situated in the East, building stronger relationships between government and civil society, and promoting inclusive dialogue.

Foreign governments, UN agencies, and private donors have all made tremendous efforts to contribute to Ukraine's recovery. Some of such projects fully or partially financed by the UN agencies and/or international donors have the youth in their attention. Millions of dollars in bilateral and multilateral assistance have already been pledged or donated to peacebuilding and other development programs in Ukraine. The promotion of recovery and social cohesion is one of three primary strategic objectives in the Humanitarian Response Plan for Ukraine.

However, while ongoing projects seek to address the protection needs of displaced and conflict-affected communities, additional efforts needed to support different age groups are required for peacebuilding and reconciliation to be sustainable. Although the «Big War» in Ukraine is ongoing, there are nonetheless opportunities to begin Ukraine's peacebuilding and reconciliation process. Peacebuilding and reconciliation measures in Ukraine will require careful consideration of the underlying causes of the conflict. After appropriate and inclusive consultations, which identify local needs and sources of conflict, a national strategy can be carefully crafted to respond to these needs.

The priorities and sequencing of this process must also be determined by national actors. Simultaneously, humanitarian agencies in Ukraine should begin considering ways to promote peacebuilding and reconciliation in their work. Although some mechanisms, are likely premature, peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts needed to support different age groups should nonetheless still be pursued. Stuck without enough time to plan or strict guidelines for curriculum delivery, youth program soldiers and workers can feel powerless over what they do with the young people they serve. Working in the field of different counties for more than two decades, the UN Peace Keeping Operations have this experience continually.

Aside from ethical consideration, there is a practical basis to promoting meaningful youth involvement in youth program planning. A variety of recent research is increasingly demonstrating that there may be no better alternative for ensuring program effectiveness. The approach suggested by this article powerfully impacts young people who participate in peacekeeping and post-war-rehabilitation program planning along with youth who participate in programs planned by youth. Less obvious are the effects that youth-involved planning has

on adults in the program, in the sponsoring organization, and in the surrounding community. If their activities include engaging peers in service to the broader community, young people involved in planning youth programs can actually affect the broad community beyond their programs in a variety of ways over the short and long term, including promoting lifelong civic engagement for young people.

Talking about youth programs in the conditions of terrible armed conflict in Ukraine, the authors mean developing strong and sustained connections to the educational, economic, and cultural values of their neighborhoods and cities, first of all during the war and post-war rehabilitation programs.

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