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“Youth, Violent Conflict and Sustaining Peace: Quantitative Evidence and Future Directions” – Summary

*To the best of our knowledge, this is **one of the very first studies to generate quantitative evidence at the micro-level on the effects of violent conflict on young men and women, and the peace and citizenship roles played by young people in violent contexts. These findings will be used to propose directions for future research and data collection efforts and feed into the upcoming Progress Study on Security Council Resolution 2250.***

Exploring linkages between Youth, Violence and Peacebuilding

- The OECD predicts that fragile and conflict-affected countries will include over half of the world’s poor by 2018 (OECD 2014) and over 60 percent by 2030 (OECD 2016) – with a large percentage of concentrated among children, adolescents and young adults, who will grapple for decades to come with the consequences of ongoing armed violence. But the effects of violent conflict are not uniform: boys, girls and men and women of different age and social groups are differently affected and challenged by the social, political and economic consequences of armed violence. Yet, this variation in the effects of violent conflict remains under-explored in the empirical literature, particularly with respect to the effects of armed violence on adolescents and young adults. The main purpose of this study is to address some of these gaps.
- The research was based on original empirical analysis conducted in four country case studies: **Afghanistan, Colombia, Mexico and Nepal.**
- The study had two specific objectives:
 - (1) **to assess empirically the differential effects** of violent conflict on young people (adolescents and young adults) on their levels of education, job prospects and forms of civic engagement;
 - (2) **to investigate using available datasets** the potential role of young people in supporting or promoting peace and stability in their communities.

Key findings

This analysis offers a first step towards the generation of rigorous evidence on the relationship between youth, peacebuilding and violent conflict. The empirical analysis points to **two important suggestive patterns:**

- **Violent conflict causes immense destruction but is not necessarily only associated with negative development and human capital outcomes among young adults.** In the cases of

Afghanistan and Mexico, violent conflict is associated with higher levels of education and labour market participation (depending on the type of employment) among young men and women. In the case of Colombia, there is no statistically significant association between violent conflict and education but there is a positive association between the presence of armed groups in specific communities for over two years and labour market outcomes among young adults. In the case of Nepal, there is no statistically significant association between violent conflict and education but there is a positive short-term effect of conflict on labour market outcomes. More research is needed to better understand the factors and processes underlying these findings. It is possible that these results represent only a correlation but not causation, suggesting that violent conflict happens to take place in areas where young adults are more educated and in employment. In the case of Afghanistan, the results may also be explained by the deployment of large amounts of international aid and military protection to districts mostly affected by the conflict. We have used a range of econometric techniques to control for several potential confounding factors, notably the use of fixed effect models and an extensive assortment of regression controls. But it is important that more sophisticated statistical analysis is conducted in the future to determine the causal impact of violent conflict on education and employment outcomes among young adults living in conflict-affected contexts.

- Due to a remarkable lack of adequate micro-level data, the study was unable to assess the **direct impact of young adults on peacebuilding** in any of the case studies. However, using **second-best approaches, the empirical analysis reveals two interesting findings:**
 - First, the study found largely no (or weak) statistically significant association in the four case studies between the presence of young people in specific contexts and the likelihood of that area experiencing violent conflict in the future. Taken together, **these findings cast some doubts about the validity of the well-known ‘youth bulge’ hypothesis when analysed from a micro-level perspective.**
 - Second, with the exception of Nepal for which data is not available, the study revealed in fact that **young people are more likely to be engaged in their community and have a more positive outlook on life and future perspectives in conflict-affected areas** (in the case of Afghanistan this result is only observed among young women and not young men). This is not conclusive evidence about a positive role of young people on peacebuilding but is suggestive of the constructive role young men and women may have to play in their communities during and in the aftermath of violent conflicts.
- We expect that this study will stimulate further rigorous research into the role of young adults in conflict contexts, as well as serious investment in adequate datasets that map and identify the potential role that young men and women may be able to play in prevent conflicts and sustaining peace in their communities.
- The full version of the draft paper is available on www.youth4peace.info. Comments and questions to youth@undp.org are welcome, by February 8, 2018.