Fearing Africa's Young Men:

The Case of Rwanda

Marc Sommers

CPR

Summary Findings

Male youth in Africa are leading the charge to cities, rapidly transforming the historically rural-based African population into a mostly urban one. Youth feature in military outfits across the continent, are being devastated by the AIDS epidemic, and their place on the margins of most reconstruction and development efforts in Africa threaten to undermine sustainable development.

Perhaps more than any other African nation, Rwanda is at a crossroads. For years, it stood as the least urbanized country in the world, but now has the world's highest urbanization rate. Most male youth, some of whom were foot soldiers of the 1994 genocide, remain pinioned on the margins, receiving little attention or support. This is a potentially disastrous situation, given their significant demographic numbers, their legacy of being drawn and forced into acts of extreme violence, and limited opportunities to contribute to Rwanda's development.

This paper sets the case of Rwanda's male youth within the larger context of Africa's urbanization and burgeoning youth population. It investigates the pervasive images of male urban youth as a menace to Africa's development and its primary source of instability. It then turns to the Rwandan case, examining the desperate conditions its young men (and women) faced before the civil war (1990-94) and 1994 genocide, as well as their experience of it. It draws on field interviews with Rwandan youth to consider the situation male youth face in the post-war, post-genocide era. The paper situates the Rwandan case within the debate on whether concentrated numbers of African male youth are dangerous (the youth bulge theory), as well as prospects for Rwanda's male youth population.

The case of Rwanda's male youth illustrates the inherent weakness of the youth bulge theory and those who argument that high concentration of African male youth is inherently dangerous. Their frightening, predictive message reveals more about their proponents than their male youth subjects. It may be more useful to ask why certain people are so threatened by some young men rather than why those young men seem so threatening. It is also useful to bear in mind the central irony surrounding Africa's urban youth: "…they are a demographic majority that sees itself as an outcast minority." The situation confronting most Rwandan youth, and most of their counterparts in Africa remains alarming. Their plight constitutes a largely silent emergency. Tragically, their general peacefulness makes them all the more invisible.

The situation facing Rwandan youth today is likely not as punishing as before the 1994 genocide in large part because an urban outlet, to some degree, exists. But that does not mean that life for Rwanda's youth has transformed from mainly hopeless to primarily hopeful. The plight for the overwhelming majority remains extremely serious. Rwanda's National Youth Policy provides a potential platform to support youth, but its implementation will require consistent and sustained efforts and resources.

If positive engagement and appropriate support for members of the marginalized youth majority in Africa is to be enacted, it will be necessary to remember that location matters. A component of successfully working with youth is to do it where they reside. Again, the example of post-war, community-based reintegration work is instructive. The term reintegration, in fact, inaccurately describes what is actually required because it assumes that people seek to reintegrate. They may not. Youth in cities, for example, may wish to integrate into new communities, not reintegrate into old ones—a decision that should be recognized, respected, and supported. Similarly, people in rural or urban communities may have very good reasons to avoid reintegrating themselves into social and economic arrangements that existed before war. The backward glance inferred by reintegration may be precisely what many people, youth in particular, do not want.

The fact that this paper addresses the fear and invisibility of Africa's male youth should in no way obfuscate the even greater invisibility and needs of their silent colleagues—female youth. Research in 20 war-affected countries over the past decade and a half shows how no population group is more at-risk and overlooked with more regularity than adolescent girls and young women. The contrast between their plight and those of their male counterparts is instructive. In too many contexts, the relatively few youth programs and organizations that exist are dominated by male youth. Meanwhile, existing women's programs and organizations are often dominated by more senior women. Stating this is in no way intended to undermine or question the needs of other war-affected populations. On the contrary, it is intended to shed light on the unnoticed lives of most female youth in war-affected contexts—the results for them are frequently harsh and hidden.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PAPERS

Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction

Fearing Africa's Young Men:

The Case of Rwanda

Marc Sommers

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Foreword

This paper was commissioned by the World Bank as part of a broader research effort on men's issues in development. The research seeks to contribute to the still nascent but growing interest in male gender and masculinity issues, and their relationship with development policy and practice. An edited volume including all the commissioned research, and focusing on Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean, will be published in 2006.

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FEARING AFRICA'S YOUNG MEN:
THE CASE OF RWANDA

I. Introduction

Male youth are Africa's vanguard. They are leading the charge to cities (Hope 1998:352), which is rapidly transforming the historically rural-based African population into a mostly urban one. Their younger members are featured in military outfits across the continent. They are being devastated by the AIDS epidemic, and their place on the margins of most reconstruction and development efforts in Africa threaten to undermine efforts to improve African lives.

Perhaps more than any other African nation, Rwanda is at a crossroads. For years, Rwanda stood as the least urbanized country in the world. Now it has the world's highest urbanization rate. Victimized by arguably the most efficient genocide in modern history, its population is riding a wave of government reforms. At the same time, most male youth, some of whom were foot soldiers of the 1994 genocide, remain pinioned on the margins, receiving precious little attention or support. This is a potentially disastrous situation, given their significant demographic numbers, their legacy of being drawn and forced into acts of extreme violence, and limited opportunities for them to contribute to Rwanda's development.

This paper proposes to set the case of Rwanda's male youth within the larger context of Africa's urbanization and burgeoning youth population. It will begin by investigating the pervasive images of male urban youth as a menace to Africa's development and its primary source of instability. It will then turn to the Rwandan case, examining the desperate conditions Rwanda's young men (and women) faced before the civil war (1990-94) and 1994 genocide, as well as their experience of it. It will then draw on field interviews with Rwandan youth to consider the situation male youth face in the post-war, post-genocide era. The paper will conclude by situating the Rwandan case within the debate on whether concentrated numbers of African male youth are dangerous, as well as future prospects for Rwanda's male youth population.

II. Fearing Young African Men

Young African men are fearsome, particularly those in big cities. This, at least, is how they continue to be depicted. It is certainly the case that young urban men scare or, at the very least, deeply unsettle, some foreign visitors to urban Africa. In his book, *African Madness*, Shoumatoff (1988) characterizes African cities as strange, even macabre. Here, he connects urban Africa to social dysfunction:

> It is only when large cities begin to appear on the landscape, as they did in the [1970s], when eleven cities in Central Africa grew to have populations of more than a million, that a societal madness begins to occur; that detribalized young men, lost souls wandering in the vast space between the traditional and the modern worlds, can be heard howling in the streets of downtown Nairobi in the middle of the night; that stark naked *aliénés* can be seen rummaging in the ditches of Bangui. (1988:xiv)

Shoumatoff also quotes a Ugandan woman explaining that "most of the people who run mad in the villages move to the towns, I think because there are more things for them to do" (1988:xv).

The idea that young urban men in African cities have both become disconnected from their cultures and cause social madness are themes that Robert D. Kaplan has expanded on to powerful, and influential,

effect.[1] Kaplan's work seems intended to terrify. He describes the young men that throng West African cities not as fellow humans but "out of school, unemployed, loose molecules in an unstable social fluid that threatened to ignite" (1996:16). Strangely, he adds that "Their robust health and good looks made their predicament sadder" (Ibid.).

In Kaplan's view, the world that these young men inhabit is repellent. He describes, for example, "rotting market stalls of blackened bile-green" (1996:15), a rural horizon as a "writhing, bumpy green carpet" (Ibid.: 26), and cities as a cultural wasteland where "forest cultures" decay and are replaced by "high-density concentrations of human beings who have been divested of certain stabilizing cultural models, with no strong governmental institutions or communities to compensate for the loss" (Ibid.:29). Young men in a bar in a poor urban neighborhood are automatically considered the robbers of the wealthy. He describes the immediate area as having a "decaying, vegetal odor." The young men and the stench collectively inspire Kaplan to announce that "Nature appeared far too prolific in this heat, and much of what she created spoiled quickly" (Ibid.:19). Given the tapestry of horror that Kaplan describes, it is perhaps not surprising that he also predicts, albeit with little or no direct evidence, that "The perpetrators of future violence will likely be urban born, with no rural experience from which to draw" (Ibid.:12). Taken together, there appears to be nothing redeemable whatsoever about young African men and the urban environs they inhabit.

Kaplan's frightening African urban male youth baton of the 1990s has been handed over to more recent supporters of the same dark vision—the proponents of the youth bulge, which Urdal defines as "extraordinarily large youth cohorts relative to the adult population" (2004:1). The underlying youth bulge idea is that large numbers of male youth inevitably sets the stage for violence. The short answer to the question of why are youth bulges so often volatile, Cincotta et al. assert, is "too many young men with not enough to do" (2003:44). The connection to Kaplan's earlier predictions are direct, and are made explicit in a 2002 speech by George Tenant, then Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who noted that the "sizable 'youth bulge'—what Robert Kaplan calls 'unemployed young guys walking around,' [is] a strong indicator of social volatility" (Tenant 2002:5).[2]

The alarmist, deterministic youth bulge thesis has been examined at length by others (see, for example, Urdal 2004). It will not be explored in detail here, except for a handful of observations about the debate it has inspired. It is useful to note, for example, that while the youth bulge thesis purports to be scientific and predictive, it is frequently hammered home by members of the U.S. security community, many of whom are connected to federal intelligence institutions. The connection made between too many young people and terrorism is illustrated in the following CIA statement in an unclassified letter to the United States Senate's Select Committee on Intelligence dated April 8, 2002:

> While we are striking major blows against al-Qa'ida—the preeminent global terrorist threat—the underlying causes that drive terrorists will persist. Several troublesome global trends—especially the growing demographic youth bulge in developing nations whose economic systems and political ideologies are under enormous stress—will fuel the rise of more disaffected groups willing to use violence to address their perceived grievances. (CIA 2002:5)

John L. Helgerson, formerly Chairman of the U.S. government's National Intelligence Council and currently Inspector General of the CIA, is among those who have highlighted the threat of young men in

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[1] Reportedly, when Kaplan's famous 1994 article, "The Coming Anarchy," was published, it was subsequently "faxed to every American embassy in Africa, and has undoubtedly influenced U.S. policy" (Richards 1996:xv).
[2] Mr. Tenant made these remarks in his acceptance speech at the Nixon Center, where he received the 2002 Distinguished Service Award for his "lifetime of public service in intelligence and national security" (Tenant 2002:2).

urban Africa as a cause for particular alarm. After noting that sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where youth bulges are not expected to decrease in the next two decades, he states that:

> The inability of states to adequately integrate youth populations is likely to perpetuate the cycle of political instability, ethnic wars, revolutions, and anti-government activities that already affects many countries. And a large proportion of youth will be living in cities, where opportunities will be limited. (2002:3-4)

While Urdal has found that a high proportion of youth in a society can be seen as both a "blessing and a curse" (2004:17), Hendrixson takes youth bulge proponents to task more directly. She first connects the youth bulge thesis to a discipline known as strategic demography, which "uses population characteristics such as age, ethnicity, geographic location and numbers to help locate terrorist or criminal threats" (2004:1). She even locates the origin of the youth bulge thesis: Gary Fuller, a demographer who developed the idea while serving as a visiting scholar at the CIA in 1985 (Ibid.:2). The youth bulge thesis also supported a related theory introduced by Princeton professor John DeIulio in the mid-1990s: the "superpredator" theory, which "equated a rise in the proportion of young men in a given population with a rise in the numbers of criminal young men" (Ibid.:3).[3] And not all young men—specifically, youth of color in urban America.[4]

Hendrixson (2003) argues that the youth bulge theory is likewise "personified as a discontented, angry young man, almost always a person of colour," who reside in huge numbers in Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia and Latin America and form an "unpredictable, out-of-control force." Conflicts arising from high concentrations of young men constitute serious security threats because they "are capable of spilling over into neighboring countries" and even other regions such as the United States, making them "an immediate threat that must be stopped" (Ibid.:8). The author further notes that the theory "reinforces a view of Southern cities as pathological," underestimates "their functionality" and over-exaggerates "their violence" (Ibid.:12).

The security-driven response promoted by youth bulge proponents, Hendrixson argues, highlights both the pressure of high concentrations of youth facing limited educational and employment opportunities (2003), as well as the fact that "angry young men" are "driven to violence by their very biology" (2004:10). Thus, the youth bulge theory implies that young men with constricted options will automatically and necessarily respond with violent rebellion.

Hendrixson also asserts that the resulting policies fundamentally misunderstand the source of the problem. The issue is not too many angry male youth. Instead, it is how resources are used. She cites the example of Egypt, where "development problems are often framed in terms of population pressures" instead of issues such as escalating disparities between the rich and poor, foreign aid undermining local food production, weakening public welfare institutions and, most significantly, expanding military budgets (2003:2). Hendrixson further adds that there is a need to acknowledge that African cities "make sense" (2004:16).

Curiously, in a great many African cities the dreadful future that youth bulge proponents highlight—of too many male youth packed into cities—has long ago become a location for high concentrations of male youth. Indeed, men (most of them young) have demographically dominated some African cities almost

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[3] Dr. DeIulio later became the first Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in the George W. Bush Administration.

[4] The superpredator theory is not the only one to emerge from the U. S. concerning American urban youth. Uvin, for example, notes mention of "the so-called riffraff theory and the wild youngsters theory" to explain urban violence in the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. Uvin considers these theories to be "without any proof apart from [their] political convenience" (1998:219).

from their inception: colonial Nairobi, for example, prohibited workers from bringing their families with them, resulting in "an overwhelmingly male urban population" (Kurtz 1998:78). Since the predicted danger of large numbers of young men concentrated in urban areas, has long ago come to pass across Africa, one can reasonably ask why African cities are not much more dangerous. How is it even possible that cities containing high numbers of young men are even reasonably peaceful?

The youth bulge thesis stains all youth in certain places—most frequently those in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa—with the mark of danger. At its core, the thesis is also not based on an argument but rather a closed statement containing an unsupportable premise: if young men are inherently violent, then high concentrations of them inevitably lead to massive violence and even warfare. While African cities are hardly oases of tranquility and content—as a rule, they most certainly are not—they are not centers for major conflict. Nor is it apparent that all urban male youth are manifestly dangerous. To this day, from Somalia to Sierra Leone and Sudan to Mozambique, sub-Saharan Africa's wars have largely been, at their roots, rural-based conflicts. Rebellions have emanated from the hinterlands (where male youth are generally not densely settled), not the capitals (where they are). One is thus inclined to interpret phrases such as—"Urbanization concentrates precisely that demographic group most inclined to violence: unattached young males who have left their families behind and have come to the city seeking economic opportunities" (Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation 2005:7)—as overblown.

Reading about the youth bulge and depictions of urban Africa by Shoumatoff, Kaplan and others is to recoil from urban African realities; to turn one's eyes toward rural Africa, perhaps as Shoumatoff notes, to "groove on the scenery" (1988:xvii). Indeed, given the dreadful picture of an urban Africa clotted with hordes of threatening young men, the response is usually not to address their problems with direct assistance. A common response to the perceived urban youth threat is to essentially invest elsewhere. This denial of the obvious has many adherents. After all, the presence of so many people in cities seems counterintuitive, at least in economic terms. As Hope has observed: "African countries are substantially more urbanized than is justified by their degree of economic development" (1998:356).

The popular post-war practice of reintegration illustrates the widespread tendency for African governments and international agencies to persist in directing much of their development investments toward rural areas, even as migrants are pouring into urban areas. Reintegration has largely been spurred by the need to help former combatants return to live in their former rural homes. The ex-combatants who have received assistance in formal programs are mainly male youth. Typically, large numbers of female youth who have also been active with military groups, are not targeted.[5] Some programs engage in community reintegration, which is based on the view that assistance is required to facilitate the successful reintegration of all their members, not just ex-combatants.

It may thus be assumed that international agency support for the reintegration of post-war communities is both necessary and effective. While this could be the case, recent documentation and field research raise questions about this assumption, particularly as they relate to assistance for, and the location of, youth.

First, post-war community reintegration frequently concentrates programming in rural instead of urban communities. This approach may be partly based on the assumption that urban youth, including ex-combatants, will return to rural communities once investments arrive there. An international donor official interviewed in Liberia illustrated this view by asserting that "The way forward is for youth is agriculture, whether they like it or not." Many do not—few urban youth in Africa appear to ever return to live in their former rural communities (Ogbu and Ikiara 1995; Sommers 2003). Urban youth may not want to farm or live in rural communities partly because they fear retribution against them and partly because war experiences changed their aspirations. A woman interviewed in rural Democratic Republic of

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[5] See, for example, Mazurana et al. (2002), McKay and Mazurana (2004), Verhey (2004).

Congo (DRC) shed light on such changes when asked why her ex-combatant son migrated to town. "*maisha ya kizungu*" (the white man's life) she stated, an allusion to her son's interest in the urban lifestyle demonstrated by foreign aid workers residing there.

Second, much community reintegration work aims to reconstruct communities. During an interview, a foreign official in DRC described his agency's community work in the following way: "We go for rehabilitation rather than new construction because we want to support something the community has already done something about." Yet this approach does not address the possibility that what community leaders did before the war helped cause it. Recent research in Burundi reveals that international agencies have unintentionally helped to rebuild structures of inequality that were a central cause of civil war. Their concentration of support in the "favored" Zones of *Communes* (such as reconstructing destroyed permanent structures) while largely overlooking "neglected" zones (where few such structures or opportunities for advancement existed) appears to have greatly exacerbated geographic, ethnic and class disparities and is a potentially destabilizing factor that could help fuel a return to violent conflict (Sommers 2005).

In post-war Liberia, Richards et al. similarly warn that "communities will sink their differences temporarily in order to qualify for a grant" (Richards et al. 2005:ix), suggesting that reintegration efforts may "empower certain groups over others" and provide, at best, temporary positive results. They add that many young people "are no longer able, or willing, to integrate within a traditional social system based on family land and social deference." As a result, "marginalized youth (including ex-combatants) see only a choice between rural dependency and exploitation of their labor, and the 'freedom' of life in urban areas." The authors imply that the urban option is by far the most popular.

III. Rwandan Youth in Context

Is there a better example of fearsome male youth than the notorious *Interahamwe* (variously interpreted as "Those Who Work Together", "Those Who Stand Together" and "Those Who Attack Together") militiamen of Rwanda? It is a well-known fact, and is consistently related in literature on the genocide, that unemployed, undereducated male youth formed the lion's share of the foot soldiers of Rwanda's 1994 genocide. The genocide itself was quite possibly the most efficient in modern history—an average, on peak killing days, of one murder every two seconds (Peterson 2000:252-3). It is thought that somewhere between 500,000 (Mamdani 2001:5) and 1.1 million (Reyntjens 2004:178) of Rwanda's approximately 7.6 million people perished during the genocide. Kuperman (2001:122) and Des Forges (1999:15) both conclude that slightly more than three quarters of all ethnic Tutsi citizens in Rwanda were killed during the operation. Reyntjens asserts that, in addition, "hundreds of thousands of [ethnic] Hutu died at the hands of other Hutu or the RPF" (that is, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the military force led by [ethnic] Tutsi refugees that had invaded Rwanda in 1990 and assumed power in Rwanda after the genocide) (Reyntjens 2004:178). What has been much less noted is just how many thousands perished during the civil war, which began in 1990 and the tentative truce that followed in 1992, which immediately preceded the genocide. Des Forges further highlights two estimates of RPF killings during and soon after the genocide ranging from 25,000 to 60,000 (Ibid.:16).[6] Perhaps 200,000 more Rwandans lost their lives while in exile following the genocide (Economist Intelligence Unit 2005a:17), most of them in DRC. Taken together, this is a staggering loss of life—as much as 18 percent of Rwanda's population between 1994 and 1996, and perhaps more. Yet Rwanda remains, to this day, the country with "the highest overall and rural population density in Africa" (Ibid.).

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[6] Robert Gersony, author of the United Nations report that was never released, estimated that between 25,000 and 45,000 people were killed between April and August 1994. Seth Sendshonga, an early RPF member, put the estimate at 60,000 between April 1994 and August 1995.

A lesser-known fact about Rwanda is the degree to which its youth have been overlooked. The literature on Rwanda, for example, is conspicuously thin on its youth in the post-war and post-genocide period. International agency and government investment on youth remains similarly low. Few programs or opportunities exist for most of Rwanda's youth. The Rwandan government has a national policy but still-limited investment levels. On its face, this appears to be both a counterintuitive and startling state of affairs. Young men, after all, demonstrated their capacity to be drawn (and coerced) into exterminating their fellow citizens.

What follows is a review of the plight of Rwanda's male youth before and during the 1994 genocide. It is designed to lay the groundwork for the subsequent section, which will explore the situation facing young Rwandan men since 1994, and the world they now live in.

Before the Genocide (and Civil War)

Rwanda's pre-war and pre-genocide history was characterized by grinding poverty, intense population pressure on land, pronounced lack of education, social and geographic immobility, a dominant, controlling, authoritarian government with an extensive record of human rights abuses, an unusually prominent Catholic Church, a small and intimidated civil society, an influential yet frequently pliant international development community (quite often generating decidedly underwhelming results[7]), and truly profound social inequality and exclusion.

Uvin draws a frightening picture of how these and other factors combined to create a life of crushing entrapment and frustration for the vast majority of Rwandans. Prior to the genocide, Rwanda was the poorest country in the world, with 86 percent of total population below the poverty line and half of its people characterized as "extremely poor" (Uvin 1998:117). Clay et al. add that 26 percent of its rural population lived on less than half a hectare of land, without schooling or nonfarm income (1997:108). Not only was ethnic and class favoritism rampant—geographic favoritism was as well. Between 1982 and 1984, for example, 90 percent of all public aid (mostly financed by international donors) was directed at only four provinces: Kigali, Ruhengeri, Gisensyi and Cyangugu (Uvin 1998). Expanding landlessness, dramatic reductions in life opportunities for most poor Rwandans, and corruption and clientelism among the elite, all helped create a rural life that Uvin characterized as a "prison without escape in which poverty, infantilization, social inferiority, and powerlessness combined to create a sense of personal failure" (Ibid.:117).

This confinement was by no means illusory. The government also had an historic fear of urbanization. Forced immobility, indeed, became a deliberate and consistent government policy that dated back to the colonial era and merely continued following independence. In 1953-54, the population of Rwanda's capital, Kigali, was, at most, 3,000 people (Voyame et al. 1996:50, cited in Uvin 1998:116). The government's mandate that almost all Rwandans remain in rural areas hit young men especially hard—they had far less land than their fathers and were incapable of supporting families or even marrying. By the early 1980s, according to one source, hundreds of thousands of young men could neither attain education nor inherit land and were in a permanent search for low-paid, temporary jobs, mostly in vain. They were blocked in their educational advancement, were limited in their employment and migration options, and lacked the resources to make a decent living in agriculture (Uvin 1998). The road from such enforced misery to participation in extreme violence, in other words, was already being built.

In principle, the government developed an option for such youth within an education system designed to allow very few students into secondary school. Called the *Centres d'enseignement rural et artisanal integrés* (CERAI) vocational education system, it was mainly intended to produce either "modern farmers

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[7] See Uvin (1998) for an extended discussion of this issue.

or local artisans in their place of origin" (Hoben 1989:108). The results were consistently disappointing. Hoben noted three central flaws: (i) community members had to pay for much of the cost of equipping CERAIs in their communities; (ii) communities had no experience in making manpower assessments or forecasts, which frequently made their choice of CERAI courses inappropriate; and (iii) government policies restricted the movement of CERAI graduates. This last factor "did not help to disperse growing pools of youth with similar training out of areas that could support only one or two" (Ibid.:113). Hoben added that while the problems of poor training and immobility were serious for boys, "it was worse for girls, who were leaving the CERAIs trained to cook dishes with ingredients unavailable in the countryside, to sew, or to embroider" (Ibid.:119). Hoben also argued that "forcing the formal school system to carry the main burden of vocational preparation is a mistake." (Ibid.:114)

Primary schools and the CERAIs were mainly supposed to provide a rural work force (Hoben 1989). For primary school leavers who did not attend either secondary schools or the CERAIs, there were limited options. These included the *Centres de formation des jeunes* (CJF), organized by the Ministry of Youth and Cooperatives, which largely provided limited courses in practical skills and cooperative organization to out-of-school youth, and *Jeunesse ouviere catholique* (JOC), Catholic centers aiming to provide "Christian morality and the work ethic with a practical approach to improving the lot of aspiring young workers" (Ibid.:88). Unfortunately, little data existed that could allow an evaluation of the situation of the majority of Rwandan youth who did not attend either CERAIs or secondary schools.

Most youth in pre-war and pre-genocide Rwanda thus subsisted in rural areas with truly limited prospects for advancement. A 1989 survey found that while most young men and women in Rwanda sought to become farmers, 85 percent of youth, and the majority of their parents, "believe that they will not inherit enough land for the subsistence needs of their families (Clay et al. 1997:109). The sense of "life as a prison", in short, was palpable.

Youth and the Genocide

From the outside, the tens of thousands of young men who were forced or recruited into the notorious *Interahamwe* certainly embodied much of what proponents of the superpredator and youth bulge theories had warned. The Rwandan male youth seemed out of their minds, were unspeakably vicious, killed thousands upon thousands of innocent civilians, and did so in awful ways.

Yet, another reality lay beneath journalistic reports of societal madness and rampaging young men during the 1994 genocide. The organizers of the genocide had carefully developed an extraordinarily effective plan, which, among other things, engaged the entire government apparatus in the pursuit of genocidal objectives. As Des Forges observed, "By appropriating the well-established hierarchies of the military, administrative and political systems, leaders of the genocide were able to exterminate Tutsi with astonishing speed and thoroughness" (1999:8). Uvin (1998) has further noted how massacres and other human rights abuses perpetrated by the government against Tutsi civilians during the civil war years met with, at most, muffled responses by the international community. This international timidity continued across the weeks and months of the genocidal operation, and has been extensively documented. Limited international protest or resistance against genocidal operations (as well as direct support for those administrating the genocide[8]) helped the organizers of genocide advance their objectives.[9] Uvin, indeed, characterized this factor as "the absence of external constraints" (1998:221).

Among the elements of destruction at the easy disposal of the genocide organizers was the enforced entrapment and pervasive hopelessness of Rwandan youth. Their situation had been inflamed by the

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[8] See, for example, Prunier (1995), which contains a remarkable, first-hand account of French complicity.
[9] More recent examples of this literature include Dellaire (2004), Melvern (2004), and Power (2002).

invasion of the RPF and the civil war that followed, which combined to make a bad situation exceedingly worse (Des Forges 1999:1). By 1994 there was both widespread drought and displacement, which exacerbated food and land shortages. Extremists within and outside government, who eventually formed the Hutu Power movement, beat the drum of fear of and revenge against ethnic Tutsi with political maneuvers and relentless, venomous propaganda against the Tutsi (Ibid.:4). Uvin observed that the racist, anti-Tutsi prejudice, already a longstanding strategy of legitimization of the Hutu-dominated government, was also "a means for ordinary people, subject to structural violence and humiliation, to make sense of their predicament, to explain their ever-growing misery through projection and scapegoating" (1998:217). Mamdani has asserted that "the combined fear of a return to servitude and of reprisals thereafter...energized the foot soldiers of the genocide" (2001:233).

All of this and more made poor, unemployed male youth easy pickings for those organizing the genocide. Malvern argues that the conditions on the eve of the genocide made it "almost impossible for the youth of the country, most of them unemployed, not to get involved" (2004:24). Coercion mixed with promises of material gain. In 1992, the youth wing of President Habyarimana's ruling party began to transform them into the massive *Interahamwe* militia. Recruitment was country-wide and targeted unemployed young men (African Rights 1995:56). They were armed to the teeth: Des Forges, for example, observed that "Businessmen close to Habyarimana imported large numbers of machetes, enough to arm every third adult Hutu male" (1999:5). The *Interahamwe* and still other young men were eventually authorized to terrorize and murder Tutsi not only with complete impunity, but at the urging of superiors.

What followed during the genocide was a near-total engagement of youth at the forefront of involvement and victimization; a story that will not be told here but has been covered at length by others.[10] It includes how young people became killers and the killed, rapists and the raped, looters and the looted. Many were forced to join in the killing or were threatened with execution as Tutsi collaborators. Some were among those who risked their lives to save the lives of Rwandan Tutsi (Des Forges 1999:11). Some became refugees or internally displaced. Some, particularly from northeastern Rwanda, had been displaced and exploited during the civil war years as well. The traumatic experience blanketed generations of young people and left "hundreds of thousands of orphaned children and nearly 100,000 people in jail facing charges of genocide" (Economist Intelligence Unit 2005a:17).

IV. Male Youth since the Civil War and Genocide

This section sketches the current situation of Rwanda's male youth, set within the context of government reforms, before introducing perspectives from Rwandan male youth about their plight and prospects.

Some Statistics

Before Rwanda's 1994 genocide, nearly 95 percent of Rwanda's population lived on farming (Taylor 1999:47). This is changing rapidly. Rwanda has not only joined the continent's surge toward cities, but it has quite suddenly assumed the lead, not only in Africa but worldwide. As of 2001, Rwanda was the least urbanized country in the world, with a mere six percent of its population in cities (Nationmaster 2005a:1).[11] It still retains its ranking as "the highest overall and rural population density in Africa" (Economist Intelligence Unit 2005a 17). Most of its citizens, in other words, continue to live with at least one foot in their farm plots, although these plots are increasingly under pressure. High population densities in rural areas, together with soil depletion and other agricultural challenges, led a former Rwandan Préfet to characterize land scarcity as "our time bomb" (Sommers 2006:90).

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[10] Two of the most detailed are African Rights (1995) and Des Forges (1999).
[11] It was just ahead of Bhutan (7 percent) and Burundi (9 percent) (Nationmaster 2005a:1).

At the same time, Rwanda's capital, Kigali, "has been growing at a phenomenal rate," dwarfing the growth rate in other urban areas of Rwanda (Economist Intelligence Unit 2005a:17). In 2000, Rwanda's urban growth rate was estimated at an extraordinary 18.4 percent, more than twice the rate of Liberia, which ranked second (7.8 percent). By 2005, the rate had fallen to 11.6 percent, which was still the world's highest and nearly two times the rate of the second-ranking country, Burundi (6.5 percent) (Global Health Council 2005:1).

How can Rwanda still be overwhelmingly rural while simultaneously urbanizing at such a high rate? The answer lies in the fact that, as noted, a succession of Rwandan administrations have kept Rwanda's urban areas unusually small. Kigali is much larger than it has ever been, but this does not mean that most Rwandans will soon live in cities. In fact, the United Nations Population Division has estimated that the percentage of Rwandans living in urban areas in 2030 will be 14.2 percent. This is an unprecedented proportion by Rwandan standards, but it is fourth-lowest when compared to all other nations, and the first three in this ranking all have less than 150,000 inhabitants (2002:54).[12]

A brief statistical review helps flesh out Rwanda's current situation. It has, by far, the world's highest rate of armed forces growth between 1985 and 2000 (1,246 percent) (Nationmaster 2005c:1). Rwanda's population is estimated to be 8.6 million (2002), and is projected to rise to 10.6 million by 2015. Forty-five percent of the population is under 15. It is one of the world's poorest nations, ranking 159th on UNDP's latest Human Development Index (Sierra Leone, at 177, is last). Life expectancy at birth is an alarming 38.9 years. It is 129th out of 144 countries in building the capacities of women even while, impressively, Rwanda has the world's highest proportion of women holding seats in national parliament (45 percent) (Polgreen 2005:A5). There are 2 doctors for every 100,000 Rwandans. The contraceptive prevalence rate is only 13 percent, in a country where 5.1 percent of Rwandans between the ages of 15 and 49 are infected with HIV. Forty-one percent of its population is considered undernourished. There are, of course, promising developments in Rwanda as well, such as in education: the adult literacy rate is 69.2 percent (as of 2002), and the youth literacy rate (ages 15-24) is 84.9 percent.[13] At the same time, a quarter of all primary-age children are not in school (Obura 2003:142), and the percentage of its pupils reaching grade 5 is third-lowest in the world (39.1 percent) (Nationmaster 2005b:1).

Primary schools endure exceedingly difficult circumstances. Since the end of the civil war and genocide, Obura notes that "the retention rate has decreased, the repetition rate remains high, teachers' salaries are extremely low and schools lack essential books, materials, supplies and equipment." (2003:147) In addition, "Boys drop out [of primary school] due to 'lack of interest' while girls drop out due to work for their families" (Ibid.:146). An encouraging sign is the expanding level of students enrolling in secondary school. As of 2003, secondary students were estimated to be 157,210, "up from about 3,000 in 1994 after the war [and genocide], and…approximately 55,000 in 1993." (Ibid.:126) In 2000/01, 37 percent of primary school graduates reportedly entered secondary school, a remarkably high rate for Rwanda (9.2 percent in 1990) (Ibid).

For the purposes of our discussion, however, perhaps it is most significant that 94 percent of all adolescents are out of school (Obura 2003:142) and that "less than 5% of secondary [students] are from the poorest 20% of households" (Economist Intelligence Unit 2005a:18). Most youth, in other words, remain out of school, and the poorest youth have little chance to advance in the education system.

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[12] That is, Pitcairn, Tokelau, and the Wallis and Futuna Islands.
[13] All statistics listed since the last citation (Nationmaster 2005c) were drawn from UNDP (2004).

A Changed World?

When the RPF began to assume control of the Rwandan government near the end of the genocide, it faced a *tabula rasa* of colossal proportions. For one thing, large swaths of the country were practically empty, since most of the inhabitants had been killed, internally displaced or had fled over borders in search of refugee asylum. A field visit to the northwest a few short weeks after the genocide illustrated this in remarkable fashion: the hillsides, once dense with peasantry, were practically empty, and the town of Ruhengeri had precious few inhabitants. Rwanda was also a shambles: Reyntjens notes that the material damage included "infrastructure destroyed, banks and businesses plundered, the civil service, judicial system, health care and education services in ruins, and crops and livestock lost" (2004:178).

Visits to the Ministry of Education building soon after the genocide illustrated the degree of destruction that the country faced. The interior structure had been severely damaged and its contents had been looted to such a degree that it suggested an effort at once clinical and energetic. The few doors that remained were shot up or cracked nearly in two. Nearly everything, from furniture to window panes, was gone or ruined. There appeared to be nothing worth salvaging. To an extraordinary extent, the new government was starting from scratch.

Amid the wreckage, the new RPF government simultaneously faced an enormous task and an opportunity to start afresh. Descriptions of what has transpired in post-genocide Rwanda, particularly the government's still-towering role over political and social life, has run the gamut from complimentary to scathing. It is but one way to illustrate the startling contrasts that the last 11 years have inspired. Rwanda has been a scene for sweeping reforms, only some of which will be mentioned here.

Decentralization of the government—not a minor reform in a country as historically hierarchical and authoritarian as Rwanda—has widely been seen as a new opportunity for Rwanda (Unsworth and Uvin 2002). The promising *Ubudehe* program hopes to eventually provide Rwandans at the lowest political segments (*cellules*) with approximately $1,000 annually for small development projects (National Poverty Reduction Programme and Ministry of Local Government and Social Affairs, Republic of Rwanda n.d.). Misser reports that the Rwandan government has the long-term aim to transform the "rural-based economy into a services centre for the region" (2004:2). A World Bank report delivers an upbeat assessment of many aspects of the Rwandan scene:

> Considerable progress [in Rwanda] has been achieved over the last ten years in a range of areas. Peace and stability have been maintained. Traditional Rwandan values, such as community participation, group solidarity, support to the poor, and Gacaca—the concept of conflict resolution through communal efforts—have been instrumental in advancing reconciliation and accountability following the Genocide. (López et al. 2004:1)

Other observers have taken a starkly different view. Human Rights Watch has condemned, among other things, the government's move at the end of 1996 to create new villages, known as *imidugudu*, as they constituted a "drastic change in the way of life of approximately 94 percent of the population that resulted in violations of the rights of tens of thousands of Rwandan citizens" (2001:1). International actors were also harshly criticized: "Praise for the generosity and promptness with which donors responded to the housing program must be tempered by criticism of their readiness to ignore the human rights abuses occasioned by the rural organization program [that is, *imidugudu*] that operated under its cover" (Ibid.:74). Pottier further castigates the emergence of new commentators on Rwanda who have almost no expertise, employ a "hasty, haphazard and uninformed approach" (Ibid.:232), and effectively support the "official discourse which legitimates the use of violence and makes some, leaders and led, *génocidaires*" (Ibid.:207). But the lion's share of criticisms are aimed at the Rwandan government. The Economist Intelligence Unit, for example, has observed that "the democratic process remains heavily constrained and

real power rests exclusively in the hands of the president, Paul Kagame, and his party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)" (2005b:7). It has also expressed concerns about government corruption (2005a:26) and asserts that the government's behavior has inspired a reduced level of standing and support from Western governments due to "concerns about political liberty at home and the controversial involvement of the country's security forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)" (2005b:7).

Of all recent assessments of Rwanda's current plight, Reyntjens (2004) probably provides the most comprehensive critique of the government's current role in Rwandan society. It is a shattering and damning assessment, as well as a somewhat peculiar one. Rather than communicating balance, the author boldly announces that his argument will intentionally be skewed toward the negative because the donor community continues to highlight government achievements, and because, in the author's view, the Rwandan government receives "favourable prejudice" that has had the same "blinding effect that caused major warning signs to be ignored" prior to the genocide (2004:179-180).

While the breadth of Reyntjens' critique of the Rwandan government and its international supporters are not shared here, some of the author's primary assertions will be briefly mentioned. The article moves across issues of flawed local and national elections, a broad array of examples describing the government's refusal to tolerate dissent, favoring the Tutsi, human rights violations, and the government's role in regional instability (Ibid.:185-204). International agencies—donors, U.N. agencies, and NGOs alike—are accused of a complicity of silence that has minimized criticism of the current regime due to what Reyntjens terms the genocide credit: "…the 1994 genocide has become an ideological weapon allowing the RPF to acquire and maintain victim status and, as a perceived form of compensation, to enjoy complete immunity" (Ibid.:199). In Reyntjens' chilling conclusion, he asserts that "There is a striking continuity from the pre-genocide to the post-genocide regime in Rwanda" (Ibid.:208). The list of similarities is long, and includes the complacent attitude of the international community. Reyntjens also describes "most Rwandans" as again suffering from exclusion, frustration, anger, and desperation (Ibid.:210)—just as they had before the genocide.

Youth Developments

Is Rwanda once more descending toward massive and extreme violence, as Reyntjens suggests? While this question will be revisited in the concluding section, it is useful to note that given Rwanda's membership in youth bulge demographics, the prodigious expansion of its capital, and the established vulnerability of unemployed Rwandan male youth to being exploited and directed to carry out acts of extreme violence, one might presume that considerable attention would be accorded their plight.

More than a decade after the genocide and civil war ended, this has simply not been the case, either for male or female youth. Most Rwandan youth are poorly educated, out of school, unemployed, and bereft of promising opportunities. A survey showed that "every second adolescent [in Rwanda] had no money at all at his personal disposal" and less than a third had a regular paid income (UNDP and International Council on National Youth Policy 2003:1). One international agency official working in Rwanda commented that about 1.5 percent of Rwanda's national budget is earmarked for non-formal education and out-of-school children and youth. Another international agency official related a conversation with a Rwandan government official who explained that the Ministry of Gender does not work on youth issues (as will shortly be explained, the Youth Ministry's involvement is also limited). The international official also related that while the government is expanding investment in vocational education, the mistakes emerging from the earlier CERAI legacy are not being heeded (such as not basing its programming on labor market information), and most graduates (reportedly as much as 60 percent) do not find jobs after graduating. As Suzanne Kaplan has recently noted, "today the [Rwandan] youth struggle to rebuild their lives with little help in a society that has been completely devastated" (2005:30).

There are precious few programs targeting Rwandan youth, marginalized youth in particular. Programming targeting youth that is provided by international and non-governmental agencies appears to be limited and unable to reach significant numbers of youth. They tend to be skewed either toward well-adjusted, educated youth or to youth facing particular circumstances, such as orphans and street children. Nonetheless, a few programs hold considerable promise. One such program aims to provide training, mentoring and job placements for participants in Kigali.[14]

The government's approach to the youth challenge is mainly informed by its National Youth Policy. The official policy document opens with a useful statistical overview of the dire situation confronting most Rwandan youth. It then identifies a number of key youth actors in the country, including new youth representatives ranging from the grassroots to the national political level, the insertion of vice-mayors charged with youth affairs into District affairs, and the national leadership for youth matters vested in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture (MIJESPOC). Several other ministries and commissions, the document outlines, are also involved with youth concerns, including education, HIV/AIDS, and the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission. Intriguingly, the focal point, 'think tank', coordinator, and implementing agent of the National Youth Policy is the *Maison des Jeunes de Kimisgara*, a youth center based in Kigali, and not the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. This is hardly the approach one anticipates from a government that dominates so much of the nation's social and political life, and it suggests the low priority that youth issues continue to receive. In addition, it may well point to the low level of prominence and priority accorded to MIJESPOC and its objectives.

The National Youth Policy (UNDP and International Council on National Youth Policy 2003) nonetheless makes a number of important assertions, including:

- In addition to income generating activities, there is a need for what the document terms 'youth empowerment' and 'youth advocacy' activities in order to make youth self-conscious and resistant to political indoctrination. This statement reveals a government view of most youth as malleable and vulnerable to manipulation.
- The prioritization of two key interventions: job creation and income generation, through programs that are large in scale and decentralized.
- The success of the new policy will be judged by the involvement of youth on grass roots level. This bottom-up approach is to be carried out via the involvement of youth representatives in relevant decision making processes.

Yet perhaps most significantly, the next steps are merely stated in a suggestive fashion, namely that if jobless youth would be included in poverty reduction projects, a high amount of vocational training would be needed. Trainers, in addition, would have to be motivated to undertake on-the-job training in this field, together with the teaching of entrepreneurial skills. No concrete steps for achieving these ends are provided.

All of this said, the government's recognition that youth concerns need to be dealt with, signified by the National Youth Policy, stands as a potentially significant step forward because the policy puts youth issues on the political and development map. Another promising sign is that there appears to be growing interest in supporting Rwandan youth among international aid actors, although it is too early to gauge whether such emerging initiatives will be able to address the concerns of so many Rwandan youth.

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[14] The program involves a consortium of international actors, including USAID, Nokia, the International Youth Foundation (IYF), and the Lions Clubs International Foundation. [http://www.iyfnet.org/document.cfm/30/626].

Two Questions on Youth

The following comments from and concerning Rwandan male youth have been culled from a series of field research visits to Rwanda since 1994.

Which Male Youth are Migrating to Kigali? In 1994, while carrying out field research on Rwandan youth needs for UNESCO and the Academy for Educational Development (AED), less than two months after the genocide, I interviewed five youth who proudly informed me that they had entered Rwanda two days previously from Bukavu, in Zaire (now DRC). All of them had been born in DRC to refugees of the ethnic massacres in Rwanda in 1959-64 that drove tens of thousands of Rwandan Tutsi out of the country. All proudly announced that they were very glad to be "home" in Rwanda for the first time in their lives. Some explained that their parents had sent them ahead to get their family's return to Rwanda started. Two days into their adventure, they had not yet found work in the capital. Already, they were frustrated, and one mentioned that he was ready to join the army.[15]

Several years later, from 2000 to 2002, I carried out seven field research visits in rural Rwanda to evaluate the impact of the Conflict Management Group's Central Africa Project.[16] One of the findings arising from interviews with male youth in a rural village in northeast Rwanda concerned migration to Kigali. Few youth from their village had even attempted it, the youth reported. To most, it seemed impossible. They explained an array of problems. Urban migration had little precedence. They had no education and no work set up there. They had no relatives in the capital. "Youth can't go to Kigali," one explained, "because they don't know anything and they can't go just to wait around" for employment. Traveling to Kigali, moreover, appeared to be intimidating: two youth invitees to a workshop in Kigali did not leave the village until the Mayor of the District indicated his approval of their trip. Rwandans still carry cards listing their place of residence and identity (ethnicity, a pre-genocide and pre-war requirement, is no longer listed).

It is not yet clear which Rwandan youth are managing to migrate to Kigali and other cities and towns. Some information is available about a narrow portion of migrants, however. A survey of some of the thousands of street children in urban Rwanda, many of them orphaned by the genocide, found that they were mainly male youth: "approximately half of street children are 15 years or older, and of these the majority are male" (Veale and Donà 2003:264). Beyond this population, little has been documented. Informal interviews with some Rwandan government and international agency officials suggest that a significant proportion of youth in Kigali are ethnic Tutsi refugee returnees, who traveled to the capital after returning to Rwanda following the genocide; the route that the youth from Bukavu followed, as mentioned above. Surely those with the networks, capital and education to start a life in the capital are present. Such information, however, remains merely suggestive and ultimately unreliable. What remains unsubstantiated is which Rwandan youth are managing to migrate to Kigali, why they migrate, and what they are doing in town. Many basic details about Rwanda's urbanization thus remain largely unknown.

What does Rural Youth Life Look Like? A sequence of interviews with male youth in a Rwandan village between 2000 and 2002 revealed lives of elemental frustration. Land holdings are tiny. One leader explained that most families live on a mere half hectare of land. Government officials want youth to form cooperatives and farm together, but a government leader related that it was difficult to get youth to collaborate. One meeting with youth, for example, descended quickly into an argument. Unmarried male

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[15] This description is drawn from Sommers (1995).
[16] The program is examined in Sommers and McClintock (2003). The Conflict Management Group was founded by Harvard Law School Professor Roger Fisher as a 501©(3) non-profit organization specializing in negotiation and leadership skills training and consulting services. In 2004, it merged with Mercy Corps to become Mercy Corps Conflict Management Group.

youth accused their married counterparts of not contributing their share of labor to their cooperative farm work. One married young man said he could not, due to family obligations. Unmarried youth challenged his stance. During a subsequent visit, I was told that the cooperative effort they were discussing had since collapsed.

The scarcity of land for a growing population was a widespread concern. A government leader present at a provincial meeting about land later related that the general feeling among the leaders present was that "there's no way out." Another leader said that "Poverty and land shortages make the youth feel hopeless. They have no vision of the future." Solutions were hard to come by, even for educated youth, and conflicts between neighbors and relatives were widespread. Some conflicts turn into unresolved feuds that can last for years.

As the amount of land available for inheritance withers, the chances for young men to build houses on their own land and then marry, as is expected of them, grow increasingly scarce. This was a persistent worry among male youth interviewed. Many regularly hunted for low wage, temporary employment. Some had clearly turned toward drink: the many bars in the village center teemed with young men. The lives of many young men seemed to largely alternate between wandering in search of an opportunity and waiting. "Struggling for life and being patient," one related, "is very, very difficult."[17]

V. Conclusions

The concluding section addresses four central concerns: the fears and realities of youth, Rwanda's urban outlet, the integration of youth in urban areas, and the invisibility of young women.

Fears and Realities: A Silent Emergency

A recent study suggests that early adolescent males with high levels of testosterone in their blood are easily influenced by their peers. If they are surrounded by peers engaged in delinquency, they are likely to copy that behavior. However, if they are around those engaged in positive activities, they are likely to become leaders. The authors of the study found that "testosterone was related to leadership rather than to antisocial behavior in boys who definitely did not have deviant peers." (Rowe et al. 2004:550)

This example illustrates the serious distortions introduced by youth bulge theorists and others who have, essentially, fingered male youth as elementally dangerous. "Too many" young African men in one place just may be a possible recipe for danger—but even then, only potentially. Youth may have excellent reasons to be frustrated, and government and international donor policies, in all likelihood, may merely be making a dire situation much worse.

Years of fieldwork in African cities suggests that if marginalized urban male youth interact with government officials, it is likely that those officials work in law enforcement. In most cases, programming and investment for them remain scarce, most particularly for members of the marginalized majority. Indeed, the answer to the youth challenge is not to further marginalize or paint male youth as fearsome security threats. That can only inspire increased alienation and a sense of being cornered. It is, in fact, quite the opposite: unemployed, undereducated young men require positive engagement and appropriate empowerment, and participatory financial and program support. Doing so promises to allow the array of assets that youth offer—namely their energy, enthusiasm, creativity, resourcefulness, and adaptability—to flourish. Most fortunately, the literature on the need to positively work with and support youth is gaining some momentum (e.g., Ebata et al. 2005; Kemper 2005; Lowicki and Pillsbury 2000; Newman 2005;

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[17] A more extensive description of field research findings is located in Sommers (2006).

Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation 2005; Sommers 2001; Thorup and Kinkade 2005; UN-Habitat 2004; UNICEF 2002a,b; World Bank 2005b).

The case of Rwanda's male youth illustrates the inherent weakness of the youth bulge theory and the arguments of others who charge that high concentrations of African (and other) male youth is inherently dangerous. As Uvin (1998) has described, before the 1994 genocide, male youth were largely trapped in lives of crushing poverty, frustration, immobility, and humiliation on densely populated and increasingly scarce amounts of farmland. Most could neither migrate nor find a reasonable means for constructing a hopeful future. Yet despite their high demographic concentration in rural areas, there is no evidence that they were in any way unusually violent or threatening prior to the government's determination (and those of their allies) to exploit and direct male youth frustrations toward violence and genocide. Mention of unemployed young men, such a staple of literature about the 1994 genocide, scarcely exists in the pre-war and pre-genocide literature—as well as most literature produced since 1994. There was nothing intrinsically and predictively violent about male youth in Rwanda. On the contrary, a much better assertion would be to wonder at their remarkable peacefulness in the face of truly wretched conditions and a strong sense of hopelessness. The young Rwandan men of 1994, in short, were most certainly desperate and vulnerable. But their violence only emerged when their desperation and vulnerability were exploited. Indeed, if out of school, unemployed Rwandan male youth are so truly dangerous, one might expect more attention and investment paid to their needs. That is only beginning to be the case, and interest in youth concerns remains limited. An international agency official familiar with the issue recently commented that "the Rwandan Government is becoming quite concerned about youth."

Maintaining a cynical perspective of youth (even while youth are being supported) is underscored, of course, by youth bulge proponents. Yet, their frightening, predictive message, together with others bearing similar messages (such as Shoumatoff, Kaplan, and Huntington) reveals more about the proponents of such arguments than their male youth subjects. It may be more useful to ask why certain people are so threatened by some young men rather than why those young men seem so threatening. It is also useful to bear in mind the central irony surrounding Africa's urban youth: "…they are a demographic majority that sees itself as an outcast minority" (Sommers 2003:1). The situation confronting most Rwandan youth, and most all of their counterparts in most of Africa—female and male—remains alarming. Their plight constitutes a largely silent emergency. Tragically, their general peacefulness makes them all the more invisible.

Rwanda's Urban Outlet

To borrow a famous phrase from the late Julius K. Nyerere, are Rwandan male youth "voting with their feet" by urbanizing? Given the spectacular failures of international assistance and government policies prior to Rwanda's civil war and genocide, when rural "development" was the only option (e.g., Uvin 1998), and increasing indications of serious difficulties in the post-genocide era (e.g., Economist Intelligence Unit 2005a,b; Human Rights Watch 2001, 2003; Klippenberg 2004; Reyntjens 2004), the answer certainly appears to be yes. The current Rwandan government is now facing something that has proven challenging for its counterparts across sub-Saharan Africa just to keep up with—massive urban migration.

The situation facing Rwandan youth today is likely not as punishing as before the 1994 genocide in large part because an urban outlet, to some degree, exists. But that does not mean that life for Rwanda's youth has transformed from mainly hopeless to primarily hopeful. The plight for the overwhelming majority remains extremely serious, and their access to available and appropriate opportunities lies, for most, somewhere between negligible and nonexistent. Rwanda's contracting social and political environment, and grossly inadequate advocacy for and investment in youth rights and development, threatens to worsen an already dire situation for most of Rwanda's youth population. Moreover, the picture of life in one

Rwandan village provided in the section just above is eerily similar to descriptions of pre-genocide life noted earlier in this paper.

The situation for nearly all of Rwanda's youth population, then, remains bleak. As mentioned previously, Rwanda's National Youth Policy provides a potential platform (or, perhaps, part of a platform) for positive movement in support of youth. What is not yet sufficiently clear is whether and how recent Rwandan government and non-government actions directed at youth will impact youth lives, which youth are ready and able to take advantage of the urban outlet, what will become of those who continue to feel frustrated and trapped regardless of their location, and how the tightening social and political environment is impacting youth lives. Research and action on these and related issues is urgently required.

Urbanizing Youth: Reflecting on Post-War "Integration"

If positive engagement and appropriate support for members of the marginalized male and female youth majority in Africa (and elsewhere) is to be enacted, as is strongly recommended, then it will be necessary to remember that location matters. A component of successfully working with youth is to do it where they reside. Again, the example of post-war, community-based reintegration work is instructive. The term reintegration, in fact, inaccurately describes what is actually required because it assumes that people seek to reintegrate. They may not. Youth in cities, for example, may wish to integrate into new communities, not reintegrate into old ones—a decision that should be recognized, respected, and supported.

Similarly, people in rural or urban communities may have very good reasons to avoid reintegrating themselves into social and economic arrangements that existed before war. War likely altered the roles and aspirations of just about everyone—older men and women, youth and children, and most definitely ex-combatants. Powerful but unpopular leaders able to silence opposing views and funnel investments through them often present an additional challenge. Into this environment arrive government and non-government actors interested in, among other things, supporting people whose capacities almost certainly changed because of war and for whom empowerment and reintegration may lead in opposite directions. The backward glance inferred by reintegration may be precisely what many people, youth in particular, do not want.

Integration is thus a much more appropriate term for post-war community work than reintegration, and flexible programming needs to support youth and others creating new lives in their new communities (such as in cities). A rule of thumb for working with youth is to avoid the term "should." In this case, it means that governments, donors and programmers need to work with youth not where they think youth should be, but where youth already are.

Lifting the Veil of Silence

Finally, the fact that this paper addresses the fear and invisibility of Africa's male youth should in no way obfuscate the even greater invisibility and needs of their silent colleagues—female youth. Research in 20 war-affected countries over the past decade and a half has illuminated how no population group is more at-risk and overlooked with more regularity than adolescent girls and young women. The contrast between their plight and those of their male counterparts is instructive. In too many contexts, the relatively few youth programs and organizations that exist are dominated by male youth. Meanwhile, existing women's programs and organizations are often dominated by more senior women. Stating this is in no way intended to undermine or question the needs of other war-affected populations. On the contrary, it is intended to shed light on the unnoticed lives of most female youth in war-affected contexts (if not in general). The results for them are frequently harsh and hidden. Nordstrom speaks of the "veil of silence" surrounding the treatment of girls in war (1999:75). This veil, in fact, cloaks most young women as well,

before, during, and following wars. It must be lifted so that *all* of Africa's marginalized youth majority can be engaged and supported with appropriate, proactive, empowering, and truly inclusive measures.

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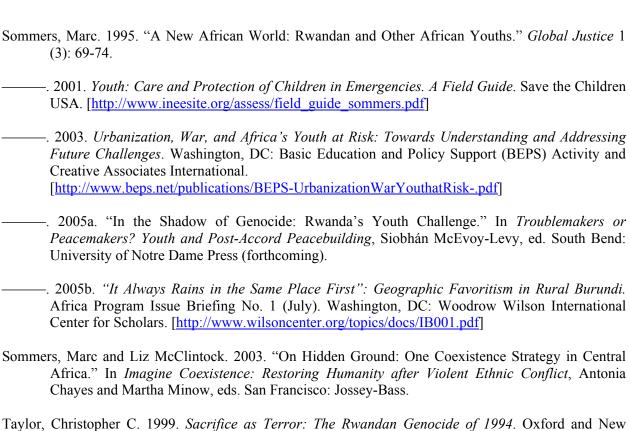
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