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Youth, Economics, and Violence: Implications for Future Conflict

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Executive Summary

The program *Youth, Economics, and Violence: Implications for Future Conflict* was convened by Salzburg Global Seminar, with support from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, at Schloss Leopoldskron, Austria, April 26 to May 1, 2015.

All youth are vulnerable to the effects of violence: Social systems need to be geared toward helping youth on both sides of violent or potentially violent conflict situations (both “perpetrators” and “victims”).

Providing positive direction through the following avenues is necessary:
- challenging and well-paid employment options;
- education targeted toward available jobs; and
- programs which support and strengthen families so they can nurture the potential of the next generation.

Economic inequality is no respecter of nations: Global economies are highly interconnected, as are the effects of inequality, both between countries and between segments of society within countries. Economic inequality with regard to the youth demographic is a problem in both developed and developing nations. Often, unintended or unexpected results emerge from the tweaking of one aspect of an economy.

The value of creating “safe spaces” for youth in vulnerable regions, so that they can reach their full potential, should not be downplayed. Only in true safety, from both physical violence as well as from the intellectual and emotional violation caused by surveillance and repression, will young people be able to innovate and solve the problems that are facing our increasingly globalized society.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure: Radical and violent groups such as IS may be effective in recruitment of young people due to an absence of positive alternatives where they can find a sense of inclusion and belonging to a group, as well as access to economic opportunity.
We do ourselves a great disservice if we forget about the interconnectedness of generations, as well as nations and economies: We all were young once and we all will be old, probably sooner than we’d like to be. The youth of today are the leaders, and the teachers, of tomorrow. How they are treated will determine how they are able to treat others.
Background

The effects of industrialized globalization are more visible than ever before, and the corresponding challenges facing future generations are legion. Due to the interconnected nature of economies driven by multi-national entities, and structured through international partnerships and trade agreements, youth populations in one region may be dramatically affected by changes in a region literally on the other side of the planet.

Border areas of neighboring regions often become sites of violent conflict as well as of migration. Migration driven by economic factors or war also occurs across great distances, forcing people with very different histories and cultures to find immediate ways of relating to each other. Economic colonization through resource-mining may leave local populations impoverished in spite of the wealth of resources actually present in an area. Increased violence is a risk in all such contexts. It may be perpetrated by, or directed at, local youth populations. Although violence in many regions often appears to be fueled by cultural, religious, or political differences, the root of all these conflicts is likely to be economic in nature.

Young people just starting out in their lives and careers, whether in an underdeveloped or a developed region, are the segment of society most dramatically affected by these global structural weaknesses, due to the intrinsic vulnerability of this stage in their lives. This vulnerability extends back to the education, family, and cultural or religious and socio-political systems in which youth either are, or are not, adequately prepared for the challenges they will face in the future. If youth do not receive adequate support or opportunity from the environment in which they mature, they become doubly susceptible to the stressors that an increasingly competitive global economic structure places on them.

This susceptibility, far from being limited to one segment of the population, affects people of all ages, and in all areas of our world.
Increasing chaos, societal instability, and conflict or violence could ensue, if this vulnerable population is not properly nurtured during their formative years.

The program *Youth, Economics, and Violence: Implications for Future Conflict* was convened by Salzburg Global Seminar, with support from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, to examine these challenges, with a view to gaining understanding, thereby leading to more informed policy-making. Session participants focused on critical elements of the interface between research and policy formation. An additional focus was the way in which principles developed in research and policy are carried out in practical ways.

The specific aim of the workshops, panel discussions, and small group meetings was to evaluate which actions should be prioritized in order to effectively address gaps between research and policy-making, as well as gaps between intended outcomes of policies and their actual outcomes. Cost-effectiveness and the role of regional and cultural variance were also examined during the program.

The process of finding solutions is an ongoing one. It requires close cooperation between donors that are looking to alleviate problems for young people and the “boots on the ground” of people who work in regions that may be sites of conflict. Solution-building correspondingly requires cooperation and integrity of communication between funding entities and local advocates, in order to direct funding to the most effective, solution-oriented policy organizations and research projects.

In response to this need for information and cooperation between varied partners, Salzburg Global brought together 60 participants of all ages from 28 different countries on six continents A main focus was placed on small-group meetings and panel discussions, with the aim to support policy-making based on experience rather than statistics, on dialogue rather than debate, and in ways that give individuals and youth groups opportunities for agency.

Participants from a wide range of different backgrounds were invited to take part in the program in order to provide a robust sample of viewpoints and expertise to the knowledge base in development at Salzburg Global Seminar, as part of its multi-year program *Designing*
A Social Compact For The 21st Century. The multi-year program is designed to examine the roles of states and families in meeting 21st century social investment needs, focusing on intergenerational and gender justice and inclusion of marginalized populations as a critical aspect for social cohesion.

Present at this session were foundation program officers, university professors, and experts in fields including anthropology, political science, youth violence, bullying, education, psychology, media, culture, economics, and law enforcement. Representatives of non-governmental organizations also took part. Participants made the journey to Salzburg from the following countries: Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Columbia, Egypt, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Palestine, South Africa, Sweden, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, UK, USA, Yemen and Zimbabwe.
Presentations and Plenary Discussions

Opening Remarks

Participants at the session were welcomed on the first day by:

Alfred Blumstein  
(Session Co-Chair) Professor of Urban Systems and Operations Research, Carnegie Mellon University, USA

Karen J. Colvard  
Program Director, Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, USA

Stephen L. Salyer  
President and Chief Executive Officer, Salzburg Global Seminar

Clare Shine  
Vice President and Chief Program Officer, Salzburg Global Seminar

Diasmer Panna Bloe  
Program Director, Salzburg Global Seminar

In his opening remarks, Stephen Salyer defined the goals of the program with regard to identifying and solving the complex and varied problems facing coming generations.

Limiting opportunities for young people to participate in the development and corresponding benefits of an increasingly interconnected world carries with it a risk of radicalization and associated violence. Therefore, providing opportunities for young people to engage with and participate in the development occurring so quickly around them is critical to maintaining peace and democracy. The following suggestions were made for ways these opportunities could be provided:

• Retooling education;
• Reducing high unemployment;
• Providing ways to deal with expectations of continuous learning that youth face in a rapidly changing environment; and
• Reducing marginalization of young people in society.
Youth Futures

Speaker:

Ahmed Alhendawi (Session Co-Chair) United Nations Envoy for Youth, USA

In his presentation, Ahmed Alhendawi pointed out that although it is always challenging to predict the future, there are clear trends.

This generation of youth is the largest generation in history — approximately 1.8 billion people. Of these, it is estimated that 87% are growing up in developing countries. They are often described in negative terms, as a liability or a potential threat to security, rather than in positive terms. Often they are defined as either the perpetrators or the victims of violence, rather than being seen as potential peace-builders and innovators.

Alhendawi noted that an often overlooked fact is that, while young people will determine the future we all will live in, they can only respond to the opportunities they are given. One primary problem they face is access to resources, and this often results in a loss of interest in active participation in the political process.
This, in turn, poses severe challenges to maintaining functioning democracies. In a worst-case scenario, economically disadvantaged youth may turn to violence by default, due to a lack of other opportunity. Youth are often more easily able to access the economic resources of a society through jobs as soldiers, than through education, training or private-sector employment. One current example, and one that exemplifies the problem is that in Syria, the average salary of an IS fighter is 4 to 5 times higher than the salary for a government job.

Alhendawi also pointed out that the data collected are too often biased toward negative markers, providing an insufficient diagnosis of the problem. There is not enough focus, in data collection and research, on finding out what elements are necessary for future generations to thrive and reach their full potential and organize a sustainable future in an increasingly globalized context. Historical research that looks at what factors have effectively brought about positive social change in the past is a potentially under-utilized source of information for policymakers.
Youth Progress and Challenges with the EU

Speaker:

Antonio Silva-Mendes  Director for Youth and Sport, European Commission, Belgium

Following the introductory presentations, Antonio Silva-Mendes gave a speech on the situation of youth populations in the European Union region.

The policy focus in the EU region is on creating opportunities for young people in education and in the labor market. Promoting active citizenship and social inclusion of young people through dialogue with youth advocacy organizations is expected to lead to empowerment.

A particular focus on migration is also a theme in the EU. Specific EU projects include Erasmus, the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students; the European Youth Portal, a multi-lingual website addressing young people in Europe and providing access to youth-related European Union and national information; and the European Voluntary Service, which offers people between 17-30 years of age volunteer opportunities in other countries.

Discussion topics in the question-and-answer period focused on the role of the private sector. Encouraging engagement by the private sector, in terms of improving employment opportunities for young people, is attempted through the creation of apprenticeships and other similar initiatives in the EU. Increasingly active partnership with the private sector is deemed necessary, but there are questions about how to most effectively accomplish this.
Science of Youth

**Speaker:**

Edward Mulvey  
Professor of psychiatry, University of Pittsburg School of Medicine, USA

Opening the first full day of the program, Edward Mulvey spoke about the effects of a heavily institutionalized system in the United States, particularly with regard to high rates of youth incarceration. One often hidden aspect of the societal effect of incarceration on adolescents is the potential effect on their neurological development.

As Mulvey explained, there are three notable differences between the psychological functioning of youth and of adults: adolescents are less able to self-regulate in emotionally charged situations; they have a heightened sensitivity to peer pressure and immediate incentives or disincentives; and they show less ability to make judgments and decisions based on long term goals or benefit. As shown through fMRI brain imaging scans, gray matter tissue change that is associated with adolescent development up through the twenties has led to development of the theory of “pruning.” Starting in early adolescence, efficient neurological connections stay and are reinforced, whereas pruning occurs with connections in the brain that are less efficient or valuable to the person. Positive adolescent development is related to community interactions with those closest to them such as parenting/parent figures and positive peer experiences. At all ages, social deprivation is considered more harmful than physical deprivation, but the negative effects are exacerbated by isolation of young people from positive social interaction at this critical developmental juncture.

Increasingly therefore, both institutional care and the incarceration of youth are being seen as not only costly to the US system, but also to the adolescents themselves, who lose valuable time while their brains are undergoing this pruning process, time in which they instead need opportunities to develop in a context of more positive human interaction.
Solutions to violent or criminal behavior need to focus on the certainty of punishment rather than the severity, if punishment is to be effective in deterring violence. Accepting, defining, and supporting family engagement is necessary, because institutions and services cannot take the place of family and peer interaction provided in a positive setting.

In the question and answer session following the presentation, questions about the impact of negative media images targeting youth were raised. The effect is known but not quantifiable at this point. A question about the development of pharmaceuticals to speed up maturity was also raised: Are pharmaceutical companies exploring drugs that can help stimulate the brain to enhance maturity? As with the issue of media influence, a similar inability to quantify the efficacy of results and unknown side effects would be problematic. Questions about the role of socioeconomic class with regard to physical development of the brain were raised, as well as about the development of empathy: Are there people without guilt or remorse? There are, but the main issue is how large a portion of the population is affected, and whether one can in some way educate them through role-play and other “empathy-developing” programs. The conclusion reached was that these programs are really the only tool we currently have to deal with this segment of the population.
Youth Experiences

Moderator:

Diasmer Bloe  
Program Director, Salzburg Global Seminar

Panelists:

Srinjoy Bose  
Researcher, Australian National University, Australia

Tsz Hin Shirry Heung  
Organizer, Occupy Central; Researcher, University of Hong Kong, China

Samah Krichah  
Activist; Board member, The Democratic Lab, Tunisia

The first panel dealt with economic inequality as an issue in both developing and developed countries.

Srinjoy Bose stated that struggles with the rising cost of home ownership, for example, are similar across economic systems, whether in developing countries like India, or fully industrialized countries like Australia. Often signs of social instability are similarly viewed in isolation from other factors. He noted that privatizing public services must be seen beyond the system that is being privatized. The example of higher school fees leading to higher debt load as students leave school and enter the work force, preventing them from accessing the housing market or taking out mortgages was given.
Panelists also noted the need to create safe spaces for youth, so that they can reach their full potential. Only in true safety, from both physical violence as well as from the intellectual and emotional violation of surveillance and repression, will young people be able to innovate and solve their problems. It was observed that groups such as IS may be able to attract people due to an absence of positive alternatives where people can find a sense of inclusion and belonging to a group. **Tsz Hin Shirry Heung** spoke about her efforts as an organizer at Occupy Central, which seeks to improve involvement of young people in local politics and constitutional debate in Hong Kong. Primary methods they use are deliberative democracy and education through academic and local debating conferences and workshops.

The question and answer session following the panel dealt with the process involved in making mistakes and learning from them, particularly in terms of learning how to be strategic and effective. Each movement that fails provides information on how to optimize the process of agitation for change. The discussion also dealt with issues of corruption or co-option of youth leaders by more established and sophisticated political forces.
These two panels discussed a broad range of regional problems, as well as general observations that came up in the subsequent question and answer sessions. The main points of the vast array of ideas are collected below, while region- and country-specific issues raised are listed at the end of this report.
Frustration from many sides was expressed in the discussions. Funding entities feel that there is not enough evidence of what works and what does not, and are not sure what policies are most likely to be successful. Some regional organizers noted that sometimes success is not visible using the same markers used in developed and stable economies. The theoretical example of a small business was given: What if this business ultimately fails to compete after two or three years, but before it does, provides a young entrepreneur with much-needed business experience, and keeps him or her positively employed during that time? Is this success, or failure, or something in between? The fact that the game is taking place on an uneven playing field, if small businesses are expected to compete with multinationals, was raised.

Participants also noted that, often, too high a burden is placed on individual beneficiaries of development programs, without corresponding changes in the systems that contribute to the problems youth face. Adolescents may be helped through educational or vocational programs, but the benefit is limited if they are sent back into societal structures that created their problems in the first place. Additionally, if there are no jobs available to young people, they may face an even more discouraging situation, having worked hard to gain an education that does not provide the corresponding access to economic systems that was expected.
Another assumption that participants questioned in these panel discussions was that more money equals a better solution. It was observed that in some cases, if large amounts of money are given to an organization, there is corresponding pressure to show grand results. Yet rather than motivate toward success, this pressure may skew the data that is collected or presented – obscuring the true nature of a particular problem, as well as narrowing the frame through which possible solutions can be viewed. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Complex regional problems require specifically-tailored programs, but the challenge becomes how these solutions can be developed on a micro level, when the funding structures are administered at a macro level.

A disparity between job training programs and the state of the labor market was noted. A recurrent theme across many discussions was the high rate of unemployment in developing countries as well as in many developed countries. The main problem then becomes whether the burden of the solution lies with the public sector or with the private sector. This debate is complicated by globalization, in which non-governmental, inter-governmental, and charity organizations are expected to operate at a global, public-sector level, while problems like unemployment have traditionally been dealt with at a local, private-sector level.
Activism for Social Change

Moderator:
Jonathan Kuttab  Co-founder, Non-violence International, Palestine

Panelists:
Nicolas Carlisle  Founder, No Bully, USA

Leena Al Olaimy  Co-founder and Managing Director, Triple Bottom Line Associates, Bahrain

Hany Hanna  Director, Supreme Council of Antiquities, Egypt

Tsz Hin Shirry Hueng  Organizer, Occupy Central; Researcher, University of Hong Kong, China SAR

This panel raised issues about how those affected by violence can themselves become agents for change, solving some of their own problems, and how organizations can help them do this.

The primary focus was on how disadvantaged populations need avenues to express themselves and to become a part of the solution-finding process rather than being forced into a reactive corner.

Nicholas Carlisle presented local and individualized solutions that he has discovered in his work with 187 schools in the US where bullying was identified as a problem. Solving the problem of school bullying is a way to prevent future violence, by stopping the cycle at a root cause. In his work with school populations that have identified bullying as a problem, Carlisle convenes meetings in the affected schools and brainstorms with the youth about what they can do to solve their problem.

Leena Al Olaimy and Tsz Hin Shirry Hueng also shared their experience training and encouraging young people, and some strategies they have found successful for youth empowerment, for example Hueng organizes conferences and meetings where young people can practice debating skills in order to improve their ability to communicate effectively with people who hold political power in Hong Kong. Although these efforts are not always successful in terms of gaining
access or effecting immediate policy change, the process of learning that the youth are guided through should not be under-estimated. The overarching theme of the discussion was on how to use non-violent, innovative, and grassroots strategies to resist violent or dominant power structures.
Economic Systems: Roles, Promises, and Realities

Moderator:

Eduardo Moncada  
Assistant Professor of political science, Rutgers University, USA

Panelists:

Daniel Egel  
Economist, RAND Corporation; Professor, Pardee RAND Graduate School, USA

Urban Thierry Yogo  
Researcher, Center for studies and Research on International Development (CERDI), Université d’Auvergne, USA

Innovation for and by Youth

Moderator:

Diasmer Bloe  
Program Director, Salzburg Global Seminar

Panelists:

Katindi Sivi Njonjo  
Lead Consultant, LongView Consult, Kenya

Janet Jobson  
Director of Programs, DG Murray Trust, South Africa

Nemanja Zekic  
President, Srebrenica Youth Council, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The third day included discussions with panelists from large donor organizations, smaller recipient organizations, and independent researchers, consultants, and educators.

The main focus of the panel and floor discussions was on how to best channel funding toward the most effective solutions. Small discussion groups were convened to further discuss this issue (country-specific innovations and insights are listed in the Group Dialogue chapter).

In working with large donor organizations to decide where and how to fund effective development projects, the main challenge is knowing how to most efficiently manage large budgets. A primary policy
goal of US government-affiliated funding organizations is to identify regions that are most at risk for outbreaks of political violence and extremism, and to fund peace rather than war in those regions. These organizations are hampered by their lack of access to reliable data or trust in the sources and methods of data analysis.

Unemployment is the economic factor currently shown by available data to impact youth the most. Inequality is known to play an important role in motivating protests, revolts and political violence, but funding institutions currently do not have enough youth-specific research to draw their conclusions.

Participants noted the need to source data directly from the communities that are targeted for aid, to ask them directly what they need. The value of this option, some participants noted, is offset by lack of

1. Katindi Sivi Njonjo
2. Daniel Egel
3. Urbain Thierry Yogo
of trust from all sides with regard to data collection as well as policy development and timeliness of funding and implementation.

In participant discussions, it was also noted that labor market volatility can be worse for youth than simple unemployment, because it causes disruption when people have to adapt to constant change, or revolving cycles of being employed, then unemployed. At this stage in their lives when they are just starting out, such cycles deny youth populations the possibility to progress, or to plan a future. Similar issues were raised with regard to mis-employment and under-employment, as well as to the role that underpaid or volunteer employment plays in undermining economic progress for youth populations.

The viewpoint was also expressed that experiences of injustice, rather than merely unemployment, may be the primary drivers of violent political outbreaks, and that assistance money often does not “trickle down” to the youth for whom it is intended, because agencies do not want to work directly with youth but with established power-holders. A contrasting viewpoint that was expressed was that aid agencies are often not responsive because they are not flexible enough and are mired in bureaucracy, or because governments in the countries they work in are plagued by the problems of inflexibility, bureaucracy, and corruption.

A main concern that emerged, particularly in the small group meetings, is how to identify small-scale projects that are effective and scale them up, rather than investing larger sums up front. A participant noted that if the programs under investigation have not shown the hoped-for success, it is because we are studying the wrong programs. This participant noted that the local, grass-roots programs that insurgents implement, often for a fraction of the cost, do seem to work. Other participants questioned how success is defined. If a program fails to become self-sufficient and closes after funding runs out or cannot compete in a global market, but did provide positive deterrence from turning to violence (perpetrator role) as well as protection from vulnerability (victim role) for some time, is it necessarily a failure? A book on the role of social networks, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community by Robert D. Putnam was cited. It postulates that social cohesion within group, and class, and culture paradigms, is an invisible or underrated marker of success. One can go bowling alone. But who does?
1. Markus Gottsbacher, Katherine Aguirre Tobón and Alexander Goldberg
2. Session Co-Chair Al Blumstein with Fellows in the Haaga Courtyard
3. Paul Sixpence
4. Aaron Schachter
5. Fellows pose for photos on the Schloss Terrace
6. Svetlana Stephenson and Magaly Sanchez
Fireside Chat: Lessons from America’s War on Drugs

Panelists:

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<tr>
<th>Alfred Blumstein</th>
<th>Professor of Urban Systems and Operations Research, Carnegie Mellon University, USA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Edberg</td>
<td>Department Director, Milkin Institute School of Public Health, USA</td>
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<td>Teresita Escotto-Quesada</td>
<td>Independent Consultant, Mexico</td>
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<td>Burkhard Hasenpusch</td>
<td>Crime Prevention Council, Ministry of Justice, Germany</td>
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After a full day on Tuesday evening, participants reconvened in the Great Hall of Schloss Leopoldskron for a fireside chat with experts on the subject of the rise of criminality and its connection with drug laws in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s.

The fireside chat took the example of the havoc that the “war on drugs” created in the 1980s, as something we can learn from. It placed intensive demand on the criminal justice system in the United States, and had widespread effects on supplier countries as well. It is an example of unintended consequences that can come from the intensive criminalization of behavior that is widespread, a stigmatization that is out of proportion to the danger that drug use actually poses to society. The criminalization, in this case of a large youth demographic, generated a response that had consequences for both individuals and society that went far beyond the severity of the problem or the risk the problem posed to stable civil society.

Youth populations who become involved in the drug trade in the United States often take this route due to marginalization and a desire to access or to share in the benefits of the dominant culture in which they establish illicit drug trade routes. This leads to the development of “sub-cultures” that are actually a response to more deep-rooted economic exclusion, both locally and globally. There are corresponding problems on the other side of the border, both in Mexico and South America, where violence and criminalization of whole segments of
society, particularly affecting young people, are increasing due to illicit economies that sprung up around the drug trade. These illicit economies further entrap youth populations, because once recruited, people have difficulty turning back to the legal framework of law enforcement or conventional vocational training and employment.

A segment of the fireside chat also examined the mechanism of legalization. This would potentially reduce the violence surrounding what is currently an illicit market, and expose it to government regulation. In an illicit economy, participants must turn to violence to resolve their problems because they cannot go through established rule-of-law procedures due to the illegal nature of their economic activity. This aspect of the problem would be ameliorated if the drug business were exposed to government regulation. Burkhard Hasenpusch noted that drug addiction itself is not a criminal, but rather a social problem, which requires much different types of intervention, and remarked: “A soul full of hope needs no dope.”
Youth and Violence in Different Contexts

**Moderator:**

**Emma LeBlanc**  
Researcher in cultural and social anthropology,  
University of Oxford, UK

**Panelists:**

**Sarah Meyer**  
Assistant Professor of clinical population and family health, Columbia University; Associate Director, The AfriChild Centre, Uganda

**Muhammad Zaman**  
Head of Department of Sociology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan

**Katherine Aguirre Tobón**  
Associate Researcher, Igarape, Colombia

This panel discussion postulated that there is increasing symbiosis between global and local actors. The disparity between job training programs and the state of the labor market was discussed in-depth as a practical example of this.

Often young people are provided vocational training in areas in which there are not enough jobs. The disparity is occurring at local levels and requires specifically tailored solutions. At the same time, it causes instability that is of concern to global actors, both multinational corporations who want qualified employees, and globalized governance structures who worry that idle and economically excluded youth populations could engage in violence. Some region- and country-specific themes that were covered in the panel discussion and ensuing question and answer period are covered in the **Group Dialogue** chapter.
Inclusion, Exclusion, and Reconciliation

Moderator:

Patrice Brodeur
Director of Research, KAICIID, Austria

Panelists:

Kiran Bali
Chair, United Religions Initiative, UK

Abdul Raziq Fahim
Executive Director, College of Youth Activism and Development, Pakistan

Alexander Goldberg
Jewish Chaplain, University of Surrey; Chair, Faith Taskforce, English Football Association, UK

Ekraj Sabur
Director, International Institute of Peace Studies, Thailand

The afternoon of the fourth day focused on the role of narrative in engineering solutions to problems such as violence.

It is hypothesized that the narratives that people are told, as well as the ones they tell themselves or others, have a profound effect on the way they see the world. Correspondingly, the way they perceive the world may play an integral role in how they construct their future, how they resolve disputes, how they solve problems, and whether they are able to gain access to the resources they need to lead successful and fulfilling lives.

A speaker mentioned a story about a 17-year-old youth who was trained as a suicide bomber and had committed himself to go to Afghanistan. Through the process of reflection and education, and through emotional support from a mentor figure, he changed his mind.

This theme was expanded upon by presentations on the topic of interfaith dialogue. Sometimes interfaith dialogue and partnerships have the power to overcome international violent conflict as well as economic conflict and marginalization. Not all examples of interfaith dialogue are successful, however, and such dialogues may be more difficult to maintain. The example of a project in Northern Ireland was mentioned: Protestants and Catholics were brought together for meetings with the goal of reconciliation, however, when they returned
to their communities, violent attacks increased because members had revealed their anonymity and each side knew where the other lived, so this project had unintended negative side effects. However, in spite of such failures, it was pointed out that groups like ISIS do not lose their funding when they lose a particular battle, and therefore the global community must stay focused on the long-term goals.

The confluence of ethnic identity with religious identity was recognized in the interfaith panel discussions. It was proposed that notions of identity and ethnicity can best be examined through workshops in which individuals are trained to reflect on their own identities as a starting point for developing empathy toward others with different identities.

Even so, as one panelist pointed out, consensus is not easy to reach, even when democratic debates and exchanges of ideas take place in a “halal, kosher, vegetarian café with a confessional and Starbucks-style furniture.” There are no easy or quick solutions. Governments have three- to five- year cycles, but it takes many generations to change entrenched mindsets. The metaphor applied here was of a carob fruit tree planted by someone who will not live long enough to eat the fruit, but who is able to eat the fruit of the trees planted by his or her ancestors.
On the final day of the program, a panel on how to achieve equity between generations was convened.

Panelists had their work cut out for them, as the title of this panel encapsulated the goal of the entire program, and achieving generational justice will certainly be no easy task. However, the panelists accurately summed up many of the issues that had been discussed over the course of the week, with a general consensus that the road ahead will be difficult, but with a proper focus on strengthening individual contributions – as well as the aspects in which all people are essentially similar in their desire to live in peaceful, stable societies – a better world is indeed possible.

The concerns of panelists and what they saw as the primary methods for effective action could be summed up into three basic types of action. The first is based on the importance of programs that help develop self-respect and empowerment in vulnerable youth populations. Such projects, which can help young people gain inner strength, provide the foundation of youth assistance. If designed effectively, they are the emotional equivalent of teaching someone to fish in order to nourish that person for a lifetime, rather than giving someone one or two meals or handouts. Secondly, projects that help youth interact in an empowered way, such as the continuation of programs that can promote positive political engagement, strengthen
democratic processes, and help youth access and engage with prevailing economic structures, was advocated. Thirdly, transformation must occur in systems that have been traditionally seen as the method through which change is effected in societies. Continuing reform of prisons, schools, vocational training and employment programs, and other structures of society needs to be undertaken, based on accurate and applicable research.

1. Manish Sharma, Motahar Amiri and Sana Shouai
2. Akile Gürsoy
3. Jana Vobecká and Ahmed Hadji
4. Aml El Houderi
Fellows’ Proposals

The program *Youth, Economics, and Violence: Implications for Future Conflict* closed with an open brainstorming session in which participants stated their own goals for implementation in their communities after returning home.

Some of the specific actions that participants proposed taking, and details of the framework of ideas they envisioned included:

- Start an online portal to share innovative ideas from across countries and regions, collaborate on documenting best practices, stay connected and support the global network established in Salzburg, and connect Salzburg Global Fellows to “thinkers, darers, doers”;
- Maintain dialogue between the Salzburg Global Fellows and government actors and policymakers;
- Continue working to make schools bully-free;
- Focus on future-oriented conversations with youth, and look to youth to shape conversations about the future, recognizing their right to self-determination;
- Strive to overcome intellectual arrogance and insular thinking, and integrate youth voices;
- Link research to practice by establishing “peace centers”;
- Make democratic systems more youth-friendly and regularly seek out youth voices;
- Make corruption reporting possible online, and anonymously, rather than requiring whistleblowers to identify themselves;
- Create spaces for open debate on issues related to justice and democracy, and offer courses on democracy and non-violent action;
- Use technology to create new media platforms connecting youths;
- Combine case studies with theory to make social sciences more useful for broader audiences;
- Bring new hopefulness to the situation in Hong Kong and continue to work with referenda;
- Take lessons on innovation and international issues (e.g. on child migration) to inform country-specific work;
- Change thinking on prisons, and ensure that they address trauma;
- Change perception of youth.

At the close of the brainstorming session, Karen Colvard, program director at the Henry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, a key funder of the Salzburg Global program, invited the Fellows to submit research grant applications to the Harry Frank Guggenheim Fundation.
Group Dialogue

Issues at the Global Level

A recurrent theme across many discussions during the program Youth, Economics, and Violence: Implications for Future Conflict was the high rate of unemployment in developing countries as well as in many developed countries (including misemployment and underemployment). The main discrepancy in viewpoints that emerged was whether the burden of the solution should fall on the public sector or the private sector.

This debate is complicated by globalization, in which non-governmental, inter-governmental, and charity organizations are expected to operate at a global, public-sector level, while problems like unemployment have traditionally been dealt with at a regional, country or city level. At this more “micro” or regional level, there is then conflict between public sector social systems, expected to provide tools for solutions like vocational training and unemployment benefits, and private sector companies, expected to provide jobs, often in return for tax or infrastructure incentives and subsidies.
To deal with the incredibly disparate nature of the many issues raised, and the variety of ways that the same issues can pose very different challenges to youth in different regions, participants met in smaller groups to evaluate some of the primary questions as they apply to specific youth populations. Group workshops met each day over the course of the session and reported back on what they had discussed. They covered a wide variety of very specific contexts in which violence is perpetrated upon people, particularly those in the vulnerable demographic designated as youth. Different kinds of violence were identified in the group meetings as a way to provide a structural framework for understanding the problems facing future generations. Categories of violence included: bullying; ethnic conflict; marginalization (social as well as economic); social unrest; violence targeting specific gender identities; family violence; violence against our natural environment, the Earth.

Globally applicable observations that came out of the group discussions included the following:

• Community norms and community responses to abuse and violence play a decisive role in how violence that is targeted toward youth is addressed. Research continues on implications for the future, particularly on how traumatic or violent events in childhood lead to biological and physiological changes that contribute to continuation of violence and victimization in adulthood.

• In order to find solutions that address problems facing youth, advocacy groups also have to define how they measure success. What is good parenting, good community support, and successful mentoring? How does one measure the fostering of youth experiences that strengthen them to live non-violent lives effectively?

• Often too high a burden is placed on individual beneficiaries of development programs, without corresponding changes in the systems that contribute to the problems youth face. Adolescents may be reached through educational or vocational programs, but the benefit is limited if they are sent back into societal structures that created the problems in the first place.
• Militarization of police forces is being seen in multiple regions around the world. These forces are not adequately equipped to deal with social unrest and usually escalate the violence instead of preserving the security and safety of society. Including non-violence in training for police and military units was suggested.

• Ethnic as well as national struggles may intensify, as people feel the pinch of fewer and fewer resources spread among an expanding population in most countries. The gap between rich and poor needs to be addressed.

1. Nilgün Ulu and Prince Guma
2. Carol Langstaff
3. Mohammad Khier Al Tinawi
4 & 5. Beatrice Lamwaka brought jewelry handmade by women in Uganda for Fellows to buy
Issues at the Regional Level

The main points of some of the vast array of region- and country-specific problems that were presented in small group discussions, are collected below:

- **In Egypt**, the needs of youth populations with regard to the labor market is the primary challenge. Scholarships and entrepreneurial funding are needed to provide opportunities at home. A high percentage of young people see no opportunities for themselves at home and wish to emigrate. This causes a high “brain-drain” of young people re-settling in developed countries that did not need to bear the cost of raising and educating the generation, yet are getting a highly motivated work force, one that is also easily manipulable due to their precarious position with regard to work and residency permits in the new country.

- **In Kenya**, and across several other countries, innovation, particularly technological innovation, is a positive driver of social change and a source of much optimism, such as cell phone charging technology that works through energy generated by a chip on the sole of a shoe, and the increased availability of “mobile money” –banking and payment for goods and services by cell-phone. A website which will showcase these efforts is in progress.

- **In South Africa**, there are increasing incidents of violence perpetrated against foreign nationals. These are young people perpetrating violence against each other. Foreigners are seen as a threat, because they are seen as taking the few opportunities available to South African youth. Educational exclusion is also a problem. Many of the public universities do not have sufficient funding and are turning into sites of struggle, yet governments are not able or willing to resolve the crisis. African intellectuals are seen as the ones to address these problems of nationalism, as well as determine what economic policies are best in the local context.

- **In Tunisia**, the protests in 2011 were primarily driven by youth protesting living conditions and stating a need for both political freedom from the secret police and access to the country’s commerce systems. The issue of reducing repression has been
easier to solve than the issue of economic access. One example of successful reform is that prison penalties for cannabis offences have been changed to community service, as a result of youth-led protests.

- In Uganda, the perception is that the government expects the private sector to create jobs, and yet the government itself is plagued by corruption. This has the result that young people are subjected to the pressures of a free market economy, without receiving any social security and/or protection.

- In Zimbabwe and Madagascar, economic and state failures have been very influential in driving conflict among youth populations. The economic collapse in Zimbabwe in 2009 led to high unemployment that primarily affected people between 15 and 35 years of age. This led not only to political violence and organized crime but also to random acts of violence within communities, induced by lack of opportunity for positive action. When people have nothing to do, no source of income, and no hope for the future, they may turn to violence by default.

- In India, the Musahar community (4 to 5 million people) live in extreme poverty, with 80% suffering from malnutrition. The literacy rate is 1%, and 95% are landless agricultural workers. Violence levels are high in all areas: domestic; school violence; gang warfare; and government corruption. Many feel forced into crime due to their economic circumstances. Youth migration is high. There have been radical welfare programs but statistically the benefits have not trickled down to the population. Shoshit Samadhan Kendra (SSK) is a free residential school for Musahar boys which aims to improve individuals’ lives and through them spread positive role models and educational benefits throughout the communities from which the young boys come. The hope SSK, Simranpreet Singh Oberoi, is that this “ripple effect” may be more successful than the traditional, trickle-down welfare. Questions were raised, however, whether the community attachment of these youths may be weakened by their participation in such a program.

- In Pakistan, the main societal shift affecting youth populations has been from extended or “joint” families to nuclear families, which causes more isolation for children. A “village” system
allows children to experience a wide range of modelling and to be influenced by aunts, uncles, neighbors, in contrast with a “latchkey” system where they may be raised by two working parents, a single parent or a nanny. Human desire for love, belonging, and justice are intrinsic to all people. Generations are not adversaries, but complement each other. The role of the Imam in Pakistan is purely religious and has not kept pace with needs of youth for advice on practical matters like employment. The military has a very strong influence. Solutions are sought through educational channels allowing for increased possibilities for self-emancipation.

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, some very successful projects have been started in the field of agriculture. There is a high market demand for organic produce. Growing this produce, particularly berries, which have a high mark-up value, has provided many young people with the opportunity to run successful micro-businesses. It was also noted that this population has recovered relatively quickly from internal strife or resentments from the Bosnian War that concluded only 20 years ago. It was posited that this is because young people of all creeds and ethnicities have been able to access these economic opportunities.

- Mexico and Central America are key sites of increasing violence against youth populations. In Mexico, students are seen as a threat and are routinely handed over to organized crime forces by the police. Honduras is the country with the highest homicide rate right now, but many other Latin American countries are facing extremely high levels of violence. One Fellow noted that this violence could even be called “institutionalized violence” since the police are so often involved, sometimes in publicly killing students.

- In the USA, protests are an example of how entrenched injustice leads to civil disobedience, which, in-turn may lead to true systems change. It is also an example of the need to evaluate how public servants who interact with vulnerable communities form their narratives. Although overwhelmingly mainstream media communicated the protests as “riots”. Our work is not only about empowering youth to action but also advocating for truthful reporting.
Conclusion and Next Steps

Diasmer Panna Bloe  
Program Director, Salzburg Global Seminar

Most societies have economic, social and/or generational barriers to adolescents and young adults exercising their full agency. This is understandable as adolescence is a time of high risk-preference, low impulse control, thrill seeking, peer influences, and limited foresight. Yet, it is also a transitory time to gain capacities and set development pathways. Environment – parents, networks, social systems, and opportunities for critical thinking and decision-making – mold adolescents and young adults (and the adults they will become).

Problems arise when youth are faced with unequal and/or unfair barriers to their development and must build their capacities in environments bereft of support. These youth may experience cultural and spatial isolation, economic inequality, un- and under-employment, discrimination, interpersonal violence, and punitive culture. Their life chances – and their caregivers’ livelihoods – may also be adversely affected by globalization, climate disruption, structural violence, and conflict. In many cases, informal means are the most accessible way to gain access, capital, and identity, and to “overturn systems that are holding them back.” However, this also makes youth susceptible to illegal activities and systems in which violence is legitimized. One example highlighted during the program came from the Americas, where systemic marginalization has led some youth to the illegal drug trade. In other parts of the world, like northwest Pakistan, these “illegal” or informal systems (e.g. Pakistani Taliban) have become the local norm.

Essentially, there are few authentic outlets that youth feel they can use to bring about fundamental shifts in the laws, policies, services, and institutions that affect their lives. Although very few youth become violent, these are the cases that receive the most attention. However, apart from sub-culture violence (such as the American drug trade),
a significant percentage of young perpetrators go against the common narrative of disenfranchised youth and are in fact educated, well-off, socially mobile, and/or well integrated within the dominant culture. In this context, program Fellows pointed to intangibilities, stressing the importance of identity and perception of one’s ability to change his/her future.

Inequalities in access, capital, identity, and agency are most often at the root of current violent conflicts. Despite continuous efforts to reach youth in conflict environments, implementation often illustrates the blind spots in and between research, policy, practice, and partnerships. Documented outcomes are seldom significant. Many programs supported by public, private, and development aid are not planned or directed by affected youth. As a result, these programs rarely work towards resolving the issues that trouble youth most – breaking down formal structural barriers towards youth progress, closing the gap between youth and influences of power, learning to mentally cope with violence and trauma, integrating support networks, using (research) evidence of what works, quickly adapting to changing dynamics, sharing learning with other youth, and inspiring and equipping young people to make a social, economic, environmental and/or spiritual difference within their communities.

Salzburg Global Seminar’s program on Youth, Economics, and Violence: Implications for Future Conflict seeks to illuminate these blind spots and foster dialogue, analysis, and solutions on how to inform stakeholders and motivate constructive, quality action, especially within the context of violence – be it state-based, civil, and/or interpersonal.

In their discussions, Salzburg Global Fellows highlighted diverse, complex, and inter-sectional issues affecting youth around the world: from micro issues such as adolescent development, school bullying, family violence, identity, and hope; to macro issues such as employment, demography, social, economic, and development systems, conflict, and innovation; and cross cutting issues such as activism, religion, gender, and ethnicity. The program also recognized hard truths – that many radical or terrorist programs, by championing systems overhaul, are getting it right. Reconciliation was also a key theme, recognizing the need to use awareness of difference as a bridge for empathy, understanding, trust, and progress.
Building on our mission to challenge present and future leaders to solve issues of global concern, Salzburg Global Seminar seeks to sustain and accelerate regional dialogue and project hubs to generate solutions that are locally sourced, target system change, and inspire youth to action. Our Fellows’ proposals [page 34] provide a critical framework for next steps on international and regional engagement and investment, which will guide our future work with partners and change-makers. Looking forward, we hope to catalyze and support efforts that not only transform perceptions of youth but also help change those systems that suppress youth voice, agency, and hope.
## Appendix

### Session 549 | Youth, Economics, and Violence: Implications for Future Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Chairs</th>
<th>Fellows</th>
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<td>Leena Al Olaimy, Co-founder and Managing Director, 3BL ‘Triple Bottom Line’ Associates, Manama, Bahrain</td>
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<td>Kiran Bali, Global Chair, United Religions Initiative, West Yorkshire, UK</td>
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<td>Srinjoy Bose, PhD Research Scholar, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia (India)</td>
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<td>Patrice Brodeur, Director of Research, KAICIID, Vienna, Austria (Canada)</td>
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<td>Nicholas Carlisle, Founder, No Bully, San Francisco, USA</td>
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<td>Karen Colvard, Program Director, The Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, New York, USA</td>
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<td>Mark Edberg, Associate Professor, The George Washington University, Washington, USA</td>
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<td>Abdul Razqi Fahim, Executive Director, College of Youth Activism and Development, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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Genevieve Sandberg-Diment has over 15 years of experience in writing and publication research for clients as varied as major pharmaceutical and medical device companies, OPEC, Greenpeace, and some local bands you’ve never even heard of. She has an MFA from the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna (Akademie der Bildenden Kunste) and completed a Doctorate at the same institution in 2009, with a thesis on Austria’s first woman filmmaker (who you’ve probably also never heard of). A recurrent theme throughout her own written and artistic work is the value of the songs of the voiceless.

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KAICIID Dialogue Centre

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socialcompact.SalzburgGlobal.org
Salzburg Global Seminar

Salzburg Global Seminar is an independent non-profit institution founded in 1947 with a distinguished track record of convening emerging and established leaders to address global challenges and drive progress based on **Imagination, Sustainability** and **Justice**. It convenes imaginative thinkers from different cultures and institutions, implements problem-solving programming, supports leadership development, and engages opinion-makers through active communication networks, all in partnership with leading international institutions.

For more info, please visit: www.SalzburgGlobal.org

A Social Compact for the 21st Century

Salzburg Global Seminar, in partnership with specialist international institutions, has developed a multi-year program on the roles of states and families in meeting 21st century social investment needs.

Intergenerational and gender justice and inclusion of marginalized populations are critical for social cohesion but come under particular strain where economic systems are confronting a “double squeeze” - how to improve start of life opportunities for all while also caring and paying for aging societies. In many countries, the greatest burden falls on the family unit; government support, where provided, is inconsistently managed between various organizations and seldom reflects forward-thinking best practices. We believe that states’ and families’ abilities to confront these challenges will shape 21st century economic systems, societal norms and individual wellbeing.

Designing a social compact’s added value is its capacity to rapidly address critical bottlenecks to progress – as identified by leading researchers, practitioners and policy makers – and link results to strategic decision points within each sector.

For more info, please visit: socialcompact.SalzburgGlobal.org