



Investing in Youth in International Development Policy

Making the case

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Executive Summary

Young people account for nearly one third of the current global population. Today's youth generation is the largest cohort of young people ever; 1.2 billion people aged 15 - 24 (Beyond 2015, 2013). Just fewer than 90% live in developing countries and close to half of these young people live in poverty, on less than USD 2 per day (UNFPA, 2010). Many countries in the developed world – particularly in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, are experiencing a 'youth bulge,' which is defined as a peak in the share of persons aged 15-24 in the population. As the international community assesses its progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and prepares the post-2015 agenda, there is a one-off window, whereby concerted international effort can enable developing countries to reap a 'demographic dividend' from educated, healthy and gainfully employed young people, and can achieve substantially higher rates of economic growth. After 2015, the 'youth bulge' in developing countries will likely plateau, so action is needed now to take advantage of the enormous potential generated by these youthful populations.

This report gathers evidence from previous research, key expert interviews and case studies to make a strong case for why the United Kingdom Government (UK) and other international development actors should apply a youth lens to all their development policies. With a focus on the need for entrenched mechanisms of youth participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of development policy, this report lays out the human rights, social and economic benefits of investing in youth. Investment in young people is an effective way to meet development priorities in an era of global contraction in development assistance and the reallocation of much international aid to security and conflict prevention.

Youth and International Development Priorities

As a major international donor and a leader in international development, the UK and other donor countries, such as the United States and Germany, have the opportunity to work together to build a global consensus around placing young people at the centre of international development strategy. Engaging young people is essential to the UK meeting its current goals of encouraging wealth creation and sustainability to enable communities and countries to rise out of poverty, as well as ensuring the durability of UK investment toward key objectives including achieving value for money in development spending, fostering conflict reduction and peace-building, improving the lives of adolescent girls and young women, and engaging the private sector in building infrastructure and developing economies (DFID, 2011b). For example, an analysis of Latin American and Caribbean youth (Cunningham, et al., 2008) estimates that risky youth behaviour (including school dropout) reduces economic growth in the region by up to 2%. Similarly, youth, especially young women, are particularly vulnerable when the economy is weak and governance is poor (Sommers, 2006), but when youth are well integrated into society and have opportunities to earn a living, their creativity to produce fresh ideas for good governance and rights to participation, accountability and transparency is the bedrock of building peace and resilience. Donors should follow a lifecycle approach that emphasizes maintaining the durability of gains achieved from investment in key areas such as maternal mortality, childhood nutrition and early education by focusing on the growth of risks, opportunity and responsibility among youth and young adults.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has stated that the private sector has an important role to play in enabling poverty alleviation and prosperity by creating jobs, increasing trade, generating tax revenue and providing goods and services (DFID, 2011c). This is compatible with the interests of many young people who are in need of meaningful participation, productive work and entrepreneurship opportunities. The UK, and DFID in particular, is in a position to assist developing countries in addressing the mismatch between skills and education, on the one hand, and employers' requirements, on the other hand, which is a major contributing factor to high levels of youth unemployment. The UK government has an important role in ensuring that private sector involvement and trade is conducted in a fair and equitable way by supporting adequate work conditions, minimum levels of social protection, and compliance with environmental standards.

Why invest in young people?

This report focuses on six distinct but interrelated areas in which young people face particular risks but also where targeted investment can effectively convert the potential of the youth bulge and demographic dividend into concrete benefits for young people today. As young people transition from youth into adulthood, enter the workforce, care for older generations and raise children of their own, these benefits

will radiate through their communities, ensuring sustainable progress toward local and national development goals. The six areas proposed for targeted investment are post-primary education; work and livelihoods; sexual and reproductive health and healthy lives; environmental sustainability; conflict and crime; and civic engagement. Investment in each area both supports and is dependent on progress in the others.

High-quality education is recognised as the best method of building the skills required to meet labour market challenges (UN-DESA, 2011). Beyond achieving decent work, however, quality and comprehensive education is also an effective means of building resilience amongst youth, enabling them to better contribute to the development of their communities with benefits for health, gender equity, and social stability. Similarly, donor investment in supporting employment opportunities for young people helps break the cycle of poverty, not just through wages, but also through improving social access and inclusion, in turn preventing the emergence of conflict and instability (World Bank, 2012b).

In adolescence and early adulthood, young people face increasing risks associated with increased tobacco, alcohol and drug use, and unprotected or exploitative sex. Young women especially face increased gendered risks such as forced or early marriage or pregnancy. These challenges are reciprocally related to lack of opportunities and quality education and can be important locations for intervention. According to Chabaan and Cunningham (2011), supporting girls to complete the next level of education would lead to significant lifetime earnings that translate into higher GDP.

Climate change presents young people with similar challenges to the rest of the population, such as threats to livelihoods and physical wellbeing, but young people face particular risks as well. For example, young men are the most likely to migrate in response to changing climate conditions, raising their vulnerability to unstable and unsafe working and living circumstances. Young people, however, are also well placed to take advantage of opportunities presented through interventions like climate finance and an increasing level of investment in green growth.

Most young people do not become involved in violence. However, there is evidence of strong linkages between poverty, lack of opportunities, inadequate education, and violence amongst youth, resulting in a negative cycle that entrenches the disadvantages of marginalised youth (McLean Hilker and Fraser, 2009). Investments that help young people meet their socio-economic needs, including those for equity, better governance, greater social cohesion, higher-quality education and more income generating opportunities can help young people become agents of active partners in peacebuilding, increasing national security and reducing the chance of civil disorder nationally and globally. To allow young people to maximise their potential for their own and for their communities' benefit, national governments and international policy makers must recognise young people's role as the future of our societies. Young people's engagement in policymaking can be inhibited by traditional, customary and legal structures that do not value youth perspectives. Capitalising on the youth dividend is not just a question of mobilising available labour, but relying on youth to guide the way toward opportunities for peace, growth and development. Young people have direct experience of the current context of rapidly changing social and political relations as well as the increasing speed and availability of information. The post-2015 agenda is a chance to learn lessons from the marginalisation of today's youth and put in place mechanisms that can enable them to provide greater opportunities for their successors.

Recommendations

The central role of young people in development should be acknowledged and promoted through the creation of enabling environments for youth participation. Social protection is a useful policy tool toward this end that has not yet been adequately mobilised for the explicit benefit of young people. The UK should advocate for youth-focused targets and indicators to be included in the post-2015 development agenda, supported by improved data collection and disaggregation along key vectors of inequality, including age. DFID should lead this process by instituting a youth lens across design, implementation and evaluation of projects, partnerships and funding.

1 Introduction

Investing in young people can generate significant social and economic returns, making it an effective use of technical and financial development assistance. Investment should be channelled to areas that can improve the lives of young people, their communities, and their countries. Changes stemming from interventions to improve the lives of young people in one area can ripple out from the local to the global level. Some of the necessary improvements include: better post-primary education, more work opportunities, expansion of access to sexual and reproductive health services and more generally to a healthy life, advances toward sustainability, a reduction of conflict and crime, and enhancement of young people's civic engagement. This paper makes the case for investing in young people by highlighting the evidence of how investment in these areas can have a positive effect on human, social, economic, and environmental development.

Although youth is a time of transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood, it is also characterized by a growing awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. Youth is a fluid category, the definitions of which vary across states, cultures and the international organisations that serve them. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), for example, defines young people as those aged 10 to 24. In Ghana, the National Youth Policy defines youth as persons between 15 and 35. These different definitions reflect distinct understandings of this lifecycle stage, which is marked by significant transitions in education, work, and social relationships. In different cultural contexts, particular transitions have greater or less significance as markers of adulthood. For example, in some cultural contexts, young people who are unmarried and childless are not seen as full adults (Antoine et al., 2001, in Cling et al., 2007; Dhillon et al., 2009). In other societies, age, employment and setting up one's own household are more significant markers. However, these varied conceptualizations complicate data analysis and comparison. For the purpose of this report, we utilise the UN's definition of youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. Within this group, we also recognise a distinction between two cohorts: adolescents (15-19) and young adults (20-24), each with its own particular psychosocial, health, educational, economic and social challenges.

Today's generation of young people aged 15-24 is the largest ever, 1.2 billion (Beyond 2015, 2013). Further, youth aged 10 – 24 account for nearly a third of the world's population and just under 90% live in developing countries. This share is likely to increase in the next 20 years as fertility rates in the developing world continue to be high. So young people are a significant share of the population today, and will continue to be so in the coming decades. Close to half of these young people live in poverty, on less than USD 2 per day (UNFPA, 2010). So, despite their share of the population, young people do not get a fair share of resources.

Many countries in the developing world – particularly in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, are experiencing a 'youth bulge,' which is defined as a peak in the share of persons aged 15-24 in the population. The world as a whole reached this demographic milestone around 1985. However, for the group of least developed countries, the youth bulge appeared more recently, around 2005, and the total share of youth in the population is expected to remain above 20% through 2015 (Ortiz and Cummins, 2012). This is a one-off window, whereby countries can reap a 'demographic dividend' from their educated, healthy and gainfully employed young people, and can achieve substantially higher growth rates. For example, the youth dividend is considered to have accounted for one-third of the growth of the Tiger economies¹ from the 1960s to the 1990s (Bloom and Canning, 2003, in UN DESA, 2007). After 2015, the 'youth bulge' in developing countries will likely plateau, so action is needed now to take advantage of the enormous potential generated by these youthful populations.

As young adults enter working age, the country's dependency ratio — that is, the ratio of the non-working age population to the working age population — will decline. If the increase in the number of working age individuals can be fully employed in productive activities, average income per capita in these countries will increase, which should generate additional economic and social benefits. This 'demographic dividend'

¹ 'Tiger economies' is a term used in reference to the highly developed economies of Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. These nations and areas were notable for maintaining exceptionally high growth rates (in excess of 7% a year) and rapid industrialisation between the early 1960s and 1990s.

can be significant particularly if the energy and drive of young people is directed toward positive social transformation and economic growth. However, the youth labour force is growing the fastest in the regions where few opportunities for paid work exist or where working poverty is widespread. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, an average of 2.1 million young people will be entering the labour market every year between 2011 and 2015, while in South Asia the youth labour force is projected to grow by an average of 465,000 each year over the same period (ILO, 2012a). To make significant progress in transforming the economic and social realities of the developing world, national governments and international development actors must harness the demographic dividend by promoting pro-employment growth policies.

Box 1: Snapshot: Young People and Development

- In 2012, almost 75 million young people were unemployed worldwide. A further 621 million young people were 'Not Employed or in Education or Training' (NEETs) (World Bank, 2013) with more than 6 million withdrawing from the workforce in 2012 due lack of work opportunities resulting from the global economic crisis. In a study of 24 developing countries, the share of NEETs is currently 12.4% of young men and 28.1% of women, and rising (ILO, 2012b; USAID, 2012).
- More than 200 million young people earn less than USD 2 per day (ILO, 2012b). Young people, particularly in developing countries, are concentrated in informal or precarious work with poor conditions and few benefits.
- Young people have a higher likelihood of being among the working poor than adults. Based on the latest estimates for 52 countries with available data, youth accounted for 23.5% of the total working poor but accounted for only 18.6% of non-poor workers (ILO, 2011).
- Young people aged 15-24 are 33% less likely to have a bank account than adults aged over 25 (USAID, 2012).
- Interpersonal violence kills an estimated 430 young people aged 10-24² every day, and for each death, another 20 to 40 require hospital treatment for violence-related injuries, with a significant cost to public health systems (WHO, 2012)
- 34% of women aged 20-24 in the developing world were married before age 18 and 16 million girls aged 15-19 give birth every year, the vast majority in developing countries, accounting for 11% of all births worldwide (WHO, 2011). Maternal deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of mortality for girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide, accounting for 700,000 deaths each year (UNFPA, 2010). Stillbirths and newborn deaths are 50% higher among infants born to adolescent mothers than among those born to mothers aged 20-29 years (WHO, 2012).
- Worldwide, young women under the age of 20 make up 70% of all hospitalizations resulting from unsafe abortion complications, and they comprise 40% of unsafe abortions and 45% of abortion-related deaths (Plan, 2007).
- Youth aged 15 to 24 accounted for 40% of all new HIV infections among adults in 2009 (WHO, 2012).
- 70% of people under 25 in developing countries, 1.9 billion, do not have internet access (USAID, 2012).
- By the end of the century, 41% of the world's youth will be African. Africa is the only continent with a significantly growing youth population (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2012).
- 20% of adolescents in any given year will experience a mental health problem, most often depression or anxiety, with implications for individual, family and community life.

While sharing many common aims and characteristics, 'young people' are very diverse, with distinct needs and interests shaped by their gender, context, ability, wealth, and stage of the lifecycle. Young people have distinct needs at each stage as they increasingly engage in their communities and go through a series of major transitions: from school to work, from dependence to autonomy, and into sexual maturity. Programmes to capture the potential of young people must account for this diversity of experience, and in so doing, development partners can help young people to realise their rights and increase the likelihood of transforming their own situations and that of their communities.

Investment in youth generates the greatest returns when started in early childhood and continued through the transition from adolescence into young adulthood. Experts interviewed for this paper agreed that

² While this paper uses the UN definition of young people aged 15-24 for most of the analysis, this paper draws on a diversity of data that uses different age ranges, so we explicitly indicate this when appropriate.

younger youth are more capable of absorbing new information, are more adaptable, and can learn more things, more quickly than adults.

Thus, investing in children and young people is an effective development strategy, because it generates changes that will last throughout their lifetime, with higher absolute returns than investing only in older adults. For example, investing in measures to promote employment for young people is a good way to support older generations. Young people generating income and contributing to the economy can strengthen the tax base, and thus increase fiscal resources that are needed to finance social welfare systems for the elderly. In countries where informal social protection mechanisms operate whereby the elderly are cared for by their families, young people who have a secure livelihood will be better able to provide support. Many young men and young women, particularly in developing countries in which pregnancies and marriage happen at a younger age, are themselves heads of household with children, so generating an environment with livelihood opportunities for them is a way to improve the chances their children will have as they grow. The benefits of investing in young people also reduce the human and economic costs resulting from school abandonment and risky behaviours such as unprotected sex and substance abuse, which occur more frequently during this transitional period of life. According to W. Cunningham (interview, February, 2012), failure to create better enabling factors for people before they are 25 years of age – such as youth-focused labour policies, accessible and relevant post-primary education, information about sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) - misses this transitional period, when much can be accomplished. Interventions later in life yield lower returns, and they are more costly and difficult to implement because:

- young people are already out of school
- they are likely to have had unwanted pregnancies and be adolescent parents
- most young people in this situation have low-income jobs.

Combating youth poverty by investing in their education, health and citizenship bears fruit as they age, through increased productivity, lower health costs, and enhanced social capital. Every USD1 of investment in education generates between USD 10 and USD 15 of economic growth premium over a working lifetime of 18 to 22 years (UNESCO 2012). Developing young peoples' capabilities and strengthening their resilience – through technical assistance, knowledge-sharing and civil society support — is essential to improve their situation and that of their societies, which, in turn, will become more resilient to unforeseen shocks. The current failure of policymakers to invest in youth risks an entrenchment of poverty for generations to come (UNPFA, 2010).

Investment should not only be financial, but it should also support mechanisms for youth participation from the local to the international level. It should forge partnerships and a political dialogue that pays closer attention to young people's needs and the benefits of focusing policy attention on them. Gains in this area might not be easily measured financially, but creating the spaces and building the capacities for well-informed youth participation has many other benefits. Evidence indicates that political participation in adulthood is largely determined by participation in youth. Young people learn political beliefs and behaviour from those around them, and over time these orientations become habits (Macedo, 2005). To promote stronger democratic institutions and good governance from the grassroots to international organisations, it is essential to promote active and informed participation from a young age. Further, active citizenship can broaden the access of previously excluded groups to opportunities for growth and higher living standards, particularly in the case of women and young people. In Nepal, participants in the Women's Empowerment Program were more likely than nonparticipants to initiate community development activities and campaigns against domestic violence, alcohol, and gambling. Additionally, they had more influence on household expenditures, and were more likely to support their daughters' schooling (World Bank, 2007). Thus, youth participation at all levels can have important individual and social dividends. Developing young peoples' capabilities and strengthening their resilience through technical assistance, knowledge-sharing and backing the development of civil society is crucial to improve their situation and that of their communities.

The international community is currently assessing its progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and preparing the post-2015 agenda. At the latest UN High-Level Panel meeting in Bali, Indonesia in March 2013, agreement was reached to promote a single and coherent post-2015 development agenda that integrates economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability to reduce poverty. There was also a call for a global partnership — including governments, international agencies, the private sector, NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) representing

vulnerable groups such as youth, women, ethnic minorities — that ‘enables a transformative, people-centred and planet-sensitive development agenda which is realized through the equal partnership of all stakeholders’ (HLP, 2013).

This opens an important platform for young people to inform the discussions based on evidence from youth-focused research, activism and project work over the next few years. Youth representatives have already been active in the post-2015 consultation processes, and during the Bali Youth Multi-Stakeholder meeting, they called upon stakeholders to ensure that young people are engaged at the heart of the post-2015 process, including the planning, implementation and monitoring stages. Further, in December 2012, the Bali Global Youth Forum of United Nations Member States, youth groups, individual youth participants, NGOs, private sector institutions and other stakeholders, as well as thousands of virtual participants, developed a ground-breaking declaration, with over 70 recommendations under the overarching themes of staying *healthy; comprehensive education; families, youth rights and wellbeing, including sexuality; transitions to decent work; and leadership and meaningful participation* (ICPD, 2012).

In addition to being priority themes in the Bali Declaration, ‘leadership and meaningful youth participation’ cut across all other areas of development. Young people must be meaningfully included in the development process at all levels, in all sectors, and in proportion to their numbers and diversity. The Bali Declaration therefore calls for meaningful investment in young people, intending not only to provide more financial and technical resources allocated to youth, but also to involve and empower young people, including marginalised groups to meaningfully participate in decisions about the distribution of these resources. This will lead to informed, strategic support for the issues and initiatives that matter most to young people.

This report gathers evidence from previous studies, and our analysis of it makes a strong case for why the UK Government and other international development agencies should bring a youth-lens to their development policies. It illustrates how investment in young people is an effective way to meet development priorities in an era of global contraction in development assistance and the reallocation of much international aid to security and conflict prevention. It highlights the human rights, social and economic benefits of investing in youth in a context of global contractions in development assistance or its reallocation to new priorities – particularly security and conflict prevention. The UK government’s recent fulfilment of its commitment to allocate 0.7% of its gross domestic product (GDP) to overseas development assistance (ODA) despite the negative trend in spending on ODA provides an opportunity for higher investment in youth which aligns well to the UK’s development objectives without having to reduce spending in other areas. This approach can serve as an example for other international development agencies. Simply put, investing in youth is a cost-effective means of realising significant economic, social, and human rights improvements.

Our analysis is based on a comprehensive review of the literature on youth gleaned from academic sources, development agencies, NGOs, and online resources. A number of interviews with key informants, including practitioners and academics, were conducted to complement the analysis (see Appendix 1). A few case studies have been included to illustrate specific points and to ensure that the ‘voice’ of young people is expressed in the report. For this purpose, we have integrated some of the results from the global post-2015 consultation with young people led by the DFID/CSO Youth Working Group (DFID-CSO, 2013).

The next section of the report provides an overview of the international development context, focusing particularly on the UK government’s priorities and how young people can be seen as central to their achievement. Section three provides the arguments and the evidence for investing in youth, detailing the benefits in seven interrelated areas for action and investment. Section four analyses how youth can be visible in the post-2015 agenda, given the opportunities and challenges that they will be facing over the next 20 years. Section five provides the conclusions and policy recommendations.

2 Youth and international development priorities

2.1 Youth and the new aid landscape

Young people do not exist in a vacuum. To situate 'youth' at the centre of international development priorities, it is important to first understand the current aims of development cooperation. For this purpose, we draw on recent reflections from a high-level conference, 'Development Policy in a Changing World'³ as summarised by Maxwell (in Norton and Rogerson, 2012).

Among international aid organisations and policy-makers, there is strong support for poverty reduction, human development, and sustainability to remain the long-term objectives of development assistance. There is a growing emphasis on rights, particularly in the context of gender relations. There is also growing consensus that elimination of discrimination and the push for equality are essential to fostering empowerment and, ultimately, reducing poverty. These outcomes are underpinned by good governance and democratic values, likewise key objectives of development. 'Resilience' is an emerging priority, linked particularly to sustainability issues, especially in relation to natural and manmade disasters, and more generally to the creation of sustainable livelihoods

There is a growing challenge from developing countries (led by middle-income countries such as BRICS) to the concept of 'development' as a dependency relationship between rich and poor countries, with calls for more equal partnerships between developed and developing countries, as discussed at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, and more recently during the Bali High Level Panel on the post-2015 agenda. Furthermore, new partnerships for development are increasingly going beyond government-to-government relationships to include civil society groups, organisations of vulnerable and marginalised people, and the private sector.

Alongside the conceptual drivers of development cooperation, the aid landscape has changed dramatically over the last decade. In 2000, development assistance was overwhelmingly provided by traditional donors (bilateral agencies in Development Assistance Committee⁴ (DAC) member countries and multilaterals such as The World Bank), but today this is being complemented by the growth of other forms of funding, including that from non-DAC donors (such as China and Brazil), climate finance funds, social impact investors, philanthropists, global funds, and financial institutions providing less concessional loans (Greenhill, et al., 2013). The changed landscape is leading to different ways of working for governments, traditional donors and the international aid effectiveness community. Investments in young people in the future must match this changed reality.

Young people are instrumental in the continued fight against poverty thanks to both their share in the population of developing countries (youth bulge) and the enormous economic potential (youth dividend) that can be realised through their full employment in the workforce. Gainfully employed young citizens are more likely to demand good governance and accumulate the capacities necessary to foster social cohesion. Youth movements and activists are increasingly channelling their productivity toward supporting their communities and countries – benefitting older and younger generations – and in so doing becoming strong partners in sustainable, rights-based development. In particular, fostering young peoples' meaningful participation through institutionalised support mechanisms is critical for them to become stronger actors in development.

Recognising the new aid landscape, donors, national governments, youth activists and practitioners must remain open to possible avenues to support youth in developing countries. Investment mechanisms could increasingly include the private sector, which can be encouraged to support on-the-job training, technical and vocational training, value chains and trade opportunities for young people working in different sectors

³ Materials can be found at: <http://um.dk/en/danida-en/about-danida/danida-50-years/development-policy-in-a-changing-world/high-level-conference/>.

⁴ The Development Assistance Committee is an international forum of many of the largest funders of aid, comprised of 25 OECD members.

of the economy, including agriculture and small business ownership. Donors, national governments, international organisations, and national civil society groups also play a key role in promoting young people's rights. They must also expand their funding and capacity-building of young leaders and create clear pathways to meaningful participation in governance at local, national, regional, international and intergovernmental levels. In addition to financing key policy and programmatic areas for young people in the medium term, international development agencies have a role to play in fostering those new partnerships and ensuring they meet solid rights and equity standards. Some progress has been made on this front, such as DFID's private sector partnerships to promote youth employment and entrepreneurship. However, more could be done by increasing the visibility of the youth agenda within development agencies. This agenda is currently not mainstreamed, as is the case of gender, though issues linked to youth cut across thematic areas supported by donors. Despite the fact that many international agencies have a youth policy or strategy, the dearth of specific objectives and clear indicators linked to useful partnerships limits progress toward better outcomes for youth policy and programming.

The remainder of this section illustrates why investment in youth should be central to the UK's development agenda. While the analysis is UK-focused, many of the arguments are relevant for other international development agencies that share similar interests and priorities, particularly in the context of the changing international development climate. As such, messages from that section should resonate beyond DFID and the FCO.

Box 2: Youth policy in selected international development agencies

USAID

In late 2012, USAID released a policy paper titled 'Youth in Development: Realizing the Demographic Opportunity'. USAID aims to empower young people to make economic, social and political contributions that can "[lift] countries out of poverty, [ensure] greater stability and [promote] healthier societies" (USAID, 2012). Applying a two-pronged approach of mainstreaming youth across all sectors and providing direct funding for youth-focused projects, the policy prioritises (1) youth economic participation, (2) civil stability and (3) a stronger youth voice in producing policy and accessing institutions. USAID aims to provide for young people's basic needs, protect youth's rights and safety, and build young people's capabilities to become 'informed, healthy and productive citizens'. To achieve these goals, USAID has set up a framework to support youth-led organizations and involve youth in all stages of the programme cycle, including policy development, programme design, implementation, and evaluation.

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

BMZ's 2011 position paper, 'Young People in German Development Policy: A Contribution to the Implementation of the Rights of Children and Youth', adopts a rights-based approach to youth-focused development policy, specifically built on the assertion that children's rights are human rights and so deserve equal protection. When states fail to protect the rights of young people, the results are social instability and a continued cycle of poverty. The report prioritises partnerships and support of developing country governments to build strong rights frameworks in order to mitigate risks faced by young people and ensure young people's access to government institutions and services. The policy aims to mainstream youth – i.e. include youth as a target group and category of analysis throughout BMZ and GIZ interventions – and support specific youth-focussed projects emphasising participation, capacity building, and access to resources and opportunities.

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

"Securing the Future of Children and Youth: CIDA's Children and Youth Strategy" was launched in 2009 and focuses heavily on women and girls. The policy promotes a specific plan of action for improving child survival and maternal health, improving access to and the quality of education, and ensuring the safety and security of children and youth. The paper indicates that "childbirth is the leading cause of death for girls aged 15 to 19 in the developing world" (CIDA, 2009). CIDA's rights-based approach and emphasis on women and girls are consistent with its focus on children and youth across all CIDA programming, with specific attention to aid during emergencies, conflicts, and in the aftermath of conflicts.

The World Bank

The World Bank does not currently have a 'youth policy'. Its previous youth unit was eliminated, because it was felt that its mission cut across other 'policy pillars'. This has resulted in less clarity about the Bank's

focus on youth. Nevertheless, research on and support for youth-related programmes is scattered throughout different areas, including gender, social cohesion, violence, and risky behaviours, as, well as a particular focus on employment. For the Bank, the key argument for investing in youth is economic, particularly as its clients are finance and planning ministers who prioritise interventions to achieve economic growth. They are driven by the notion of investing in youth today, to contribute to economic growth and social cohesion, both now and in the future.

The World Bank Group supports interventions that improve labour market outcomes for youth, including policies to address market failures that affect employability and opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship. It supports active labour market and youth employment programs that use training, public works, and job search assistance in helping young people develop skills and increase employment opportunities. In collaboration with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Youth Employment Network (YEN), and the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Bank has developed a Youth Employment Inventory that provides comparative information among more than 500 youth employment programs in around 90 countries. The Bank is increasingly using impact evaluations to generate an evidence base of the ingredients for improving the design and implementation of youth employment policies. The Bank's investment in this area has been growing, an indicator of its commitment to promote youth employment. Nevertheless, the Bank's Independent Evaluation Group's (IEG) review of work on youth employment advised that a "comprehensive approach is missing in the Bank's youth employment projects" (IEG 2012), which indicates the need for a more holistic, cross-programme approach to these projects.

UK Department for International Development (DFID)

Although DFID does not currently have high-level policy guidance on youth, young women and adolescent girls are a key target group for DFID's work. As part of achieving 'value for money' in the process of 'helping countries graduate from aid', DFID ensures that interventions benefit women (especially younger women) through cash transfers, land entitlement improvements, and safe access to infrastructure and resources. DFID's targeting of girls is primarily through improving access to and the quality of education as a means of breaking the cycle of poverty, and improving maternal, sexual and reproductive health. DFID's current focus on girls and women, as well as previous efforts to develop a knowledge base on youth and development issues, demonstrate an understanding of the importance of young people in development strategy. This focus could be strengthened by a greater commitment to transformative programming interventions for youth.

DFID provides funding and support for youth through NGOs, including those that are part of the DFID Civil Society Organisations Youth Working Group, a coalition of youth centred development NGOs. In 2009/10, the Youth Working Group produced a guide for development agencies and policy makers entitled "Youth Participation in Development". The report represents the culmination of a process to increase the attention to youth within UK development policy begun by DFID. The report provides concrete examples of successful youth participation in planning, implementation and evaluation, providing a model for full integration of youth participation techniques across DFID's development activities. In 2011, DFID followed up with a Programme Partnership Arrangement with the Youth Consortium, led by NGOs also part of the Youth Working Group, demonstrating continued commitment to strengthening their performance on youth and development.

2.2 UK's development priorities

The UK is a major international donor and a leader in international development. The UK's commitment to challenge inequalities of opportunity globally is motivated by both a moral duty to help those in greatest need and by UK domestic interests which are served by stability, poverty alleviation and increased global trade and prosperity. The UK's current approach to aid is to encourage wealth creation and sustainability to enable communities and countries to rise out of poverty (DFID, 2011b). Achieving these objectives requires engaging young people.

As a signatory to international conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and a proponent of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, the UK is committed to addressing the effects of inequality, poverty and instability. Evidence of this commitment is its near achievement of the

development assistance target of 0.7% of GDP, as pledged in March 2002 at the International Conference on Financing for Development.

The UK has made progress in financing development targeted toward specific lifecycle stages, including childhood and youth (Marcus, et al 2012). Most recently, international funding – particularly through DFID and the FCO – has prioritised the reduction of gender inequality, with programmes focused on early-life interventions such as maternal, new-born and child health (MNCH) and improved education for women and girls. Many of these interventions are aimed at young women between the ages of 15 and 24, who are particularly affected by challenges related to their transition from primary to secondary education, a consequence of entrenched norms of gender inequality and sexual and reproductive health challenges.

DFID has initiated research into priorities for youth-focused development policy and partnered with youth-focused and youth-led organisations. DFID, the FCO and the MOD recognise the importance of addressing large-scale global processes that affect youth, such as migration urbanisation and conflict, and widespread domestic problems, such as health inequality and unemployment, and violence (DFID et al. 2011). Not only does this assistance improve the plight of youth, but it shapes the communities and countries in which they live.

DFID's investment plan focuses on deepening involvement in fewer, more unstable states; targeting women and girls; and encouraging private sector engagement (DFID, 2011c). There is an underlying drive for ensuring 'value for money' of investments to improve accountability. Below, we outline how the UK's development priorities are linked with young people, thus highlighting the importance of bringing youth to the centre of programme planning and implementation in order to better achieve development objectives.

Investing in youth is value for money

DFID's commitment to achieving the greatest value for money (VFM) seeks the greatest return for poor people for every British pound spent (DFID, 2011b). Emphasising the greatest impact rather than the lowest cost means prioritising investments that produce durable results. DFID has therefore identified foundational areas for investment that build the skills and infrastructure necessary to help countries foster economic growth and graduate from aid. Investment to foster youth inclusion and human development is good value for money, given the high economic and social costs of non-action. In Jordan, for instance, youth exclusion (joblessness, adolescent pregnancy, early school dropout and migration) cost an estimated 7.2% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2007, and meant a loss to Egypt of 17.2% of GDP (Chabaan, 2007, in Dhillon et al., 2009).

For DFID, development of health and education systems figures prominently on the agenda, and many of the achievements in this area have benefitted children and young mothers, particularly through higher primary school enrolment and reduction in infant and maternal mortality. To increase the value of such investments DFID must support human development trajectories in the medium and long term that take into account transitions from childhood to youth.

Thus, supporting transitions to quality secondary school is a VFM objective. For example, an analysis of Latin American and Caribbean youth (Cunningham, et al., 2008) estimates that risky youth behaviour (including school dropout) reduces economic growth in the region by up to 2%. Similarly, a study by Plan International (2008) shows that investing in the secondary education of adolescent girls in particular is VFM. After adjusting for other factors such as the lower fertility rates of educated women, increasing the share of women with secondary education by one percentage point increases a country's annual per capita income growth by an average of 0.3 percentage points. DFID funding already encourages the transition into secondary school – particularly for adolescent girls – solidifying and building on gains achieved at the primary level. But beyond promoting secondary school enrolment, a greater focus is needed on better quality, and to provide relevant training and employment assistance.

Like investment in post-primary education, investment in other areas of human development such as health, should maintain its gains by following a lifecycle approach that recognises the growth of risks, opportunity and responsibility among youth and young adults.

Investing in youth to foster conflict reduction and peace-building

One of DFID's current focus areas is 'Governance and Conflict'. It is channelling a significant share of resources to unstable countries – 21 out of 28 of DFID's focus countries are fragile or conflict-affected,

and the UK Government has committed to spend 30% of Official Development Assistance in these environments⁵. Drawing on well established evidence (see for example OECD, 2008), this approach acknowledges that stable, well governed countries lie at the heart of prosperity and real progress, and that preventing conflict and building effective and legitimate institutions that can deliver basic services are crucial to reducing poverty. DFID's approach falls into the broader UK government's 'Building Stability Overseas Strategy' (BSOS), which lays out the case for addressing instability and conflict, not only because it is morally right, but because it is in Britain's national interest (DFID et al., 2011). The strategy explains that the cost to the international community of managing conflict and its effects are high; it is far more cost-effective to invest in conflict prevention and de-escalation (DFID et al., 2011). However, although BSOS mentions the example of the Arab Spring as a development that has helped garner international support for the development of resilience and stability (DFID et al., 2011), it does not mention the instrumental role young people played in bringing about the regime changes, and it makes virtually no references to the role of young people in both conflict and reconciliation.

Youth, especially young women, are particularly vulnerable when the economy is weak and governance is poor (Sommers, 2006). Although young people are commonly portrayed as violent, they are far more likely to be victims, rather than perpetrators of violence. In fact, young people can make a positive contribution to peacebuilding and development (McLean Hilker and Fraser, 2009). Ensuring that youth are well integrated into society and have opportunities to earn a living is the bedrock of building peace and resilience. Young people, the largest cohort in developing countries, are endowed with both the creativity to produce fresh ideas for good governance and rights to participation, accountability and transparency. Efforts to build civil society and strengthen institutions must therefore focus on youth, taking advantage of the youth dividend to develop leadership skills and social cohesion. In conflict and post-conflict contexts, the engagement of young citizens can help produce the stability necessary for countries to graduate from aid.

For young people with few opportunities for education, training, and employment, the costs of turning to exploitative work or violence are low. Indeed, for some young people the informal economy and peer groups engaged in violent behaviour fill a gap in their personal development by providing alternative means of achieving status and self-sufficiency (SDD, 2009). Until these young people are given positive opportunities to achieve status within their communities, informal work and violence will remain attractive. Investing in young people therefore is an effective way to prevent conflict.

Box 3: Young Voters in Sierra Leone's 2012 Election

In the run-up to the 2012 elections in Sierra Leone, Restless Development led a youth consultation process that highlighted young people's hopes and goals for the outcome of the elections, as well as charting their engagement with the political process. Preparatory research showed that a minority of young people in Sierra Leone were engaged in or felt represented by mainstream political processes stating that 'only 23% of young people are aware of a policy that influences their wellbeing, 38% are aware of community decision-making committees with young people's representation and only 6% of young people in rural areas have ever attended national level policy or decision-making meetings'. Youth alienation had been linked to violence during the civil war with an increase in youth violence around elections. The process sought to challenge the pathologisation of young people as a destabilising force in Sierra Leone, instead providing an outlet for young people's voices and a means of constructive cooperation among politicians, NGOs and young people.

73% of the population of Sierra Leone is under 35 years of age, and voters between 18 and 35 account for around 55% of the registered electorate. The failure of mainstream politicians to represent such a substantial proportion of their constituency is a clear indicator of young people's marginalisation from social institutions and decision making. However, 93% of eligible young voters had registered to participate in elections, presenting a challenge to the accepted narrative of young people as disengaged and destabilising.

The process succeeded in building partnerships among young people and civil society groups that effectively highlighted young people's positive impact on political processes and provided new pathways for youth engagement. The resulting manifesto was used through these partnerships to represent young people's aspirations for the election outcomes and to highlight the necessity of further involving young

⁵ <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/What-we-do/Key-Issues/Governance-and-conflict/>.

people as an essential constituency and partner in development, policymaking and political processes in Sierra Leone.

Source: Restless Development (2012) Youth Manifesto for the 2012 Elections: What young people think about politics and the future of Sierra Leone.

Adolescent girls and young women

International development policy, particularly in the UK (both through DFID and the FCO) has recently focused on adolescent girls, not only because of the increased vulnerability faced by young women, but also because of the impact achieved by intervening at an early age.

The four pillars of DFID's 'Strategic Vision for Girls and Women' include (1) delay first pregnancy and support safe childbirth; (2) get economic assets directly to girls and women; (3) get girls through secondary school; and (4) prevent violence against girls and women (DFID, 2011a). There is a strong focus on 15- to 24-year olds, because it is during this transitional period that young women enter sexual relationships, move to secondary school, and enter the workforce. In particular, it is young girls between 15 and 24 who are most affected by early marriage, early childbirth, and unsafe abortion, and who are failing to transition to secondary school (UNFPA, 2010). As such, improving the situation faced by young women – including their access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, income-generating opportunities, and spaces for decision-making and political empowerment (Jones, et al., 2010) are instrumental to achieving the strategy.

Young girls and women face, among many gender-based oppressions, barriers to accessing resources, threats to personal security, and discrimination at home, school and work. Their sexual and reproductive health rights are also compromised globally. We know that changing this picture requires both direct action and a nurturing environment, including interventions with men and boys to improve social recognition of human rights and gender equality, with the intended result of improving women's status within their families and wider society.

Box 4: Young women's experiences with discriminatory gender practices

Yizabu, now 17 years old, was enrolled in school but dropped when she was 12. Her parents arranged for her to get married when she was only 14 years old. Without information about family planning or support from her husband or family to receive contraceptive methods from the local health clinic, she gave birth at only 15 years of age, and as a consequence of early pregnancy and inadequate care during her delivery, she now lives with obstetric fistula. One year after her child was born, her husband went to Saudi Arabia, a common migration destination for young Ethiopians from Amhara Region. A few months later, without having made much money, he returned because he was seriously ill. He had no access to medical support and died within a few days of his arrival. So at 16, Yizabu was a widow with a baby daughter. She had no possibilities to return to school as she had to earn a living and care for her daughter. Though Yizabu is content at the moment with petty trading and the little money she makes, she does worry about eventualities. What if she falls ill and has to stay in bed for a long time? What will happen to her daughter? Yizabu recalls that she was not happy on her wedding day, she could not stop crying. She felt like she was being taken to her death, to her grave. She knew marriage would change her life forever. She can only imagine that if she had not married she would have led her life in a completely different way. She would have continued with her education for at least a few years more and then she might have migrated, as did many of her friends who have better lives now. (In-depth interview with 17-year-old girl in Ethiopia)

'It happened to me when I was in BT1. The teacher of our main subject asked me to have sex with him and I refused. It was at the time of our exams. There were more than 70 students and he put me in last place. The school head called me and asked me what was going on. I burst into tears and said I couldn't tell him [...] eventually I said this man says he wants to have sex with me and as I didn't accept he has given me a bad mark. The head said nothing. And then in class, he (the teacher) said this year was not going to be easy and there would be some people who would fail. In any case, I did not accept his offer. If I hadn't been trained as a peer educator, maybe I would have given in to him as many girls do'. (In-depth interview with 15-year-old girl in Mali)

Source: Ethiopia: Tefera and Perezniето, forthcoming; Mali: Castle and Diallo, 2008.

Evidence indicates that focusing on adolescent girls has a multiplier effect on their household and communities. Adolescent girls represent a huge untapped potential and can be instrumental to breaking intergenerational poverty cycles. For instance, a growing number of families rely on females, often young females, as their sole support (UNFPA, 2010). Early intervention to enhance the ability of young women to find decent work and to promote recognition of young women's rights enables them to make productive contributions to their families, their communities and their own futures. Promoting gender equity requires supporting robust systems of rights, and access to justice, resources, services and opportunities that enable economic empowerment through safe, well paid work or small business creation. They are able to build a better future for themselves and their families while accelerating growth in the economies and human capital of their communities (Plan, 2009).

The private sector

DFID has stated that the private sector has an important role to play in alleviating poverty and enabling prosperity by creating jobs, increasing trade, generating tax revenue and providing goods and services (DFID, 2011c). A speech by the Secretary of State for International Development in March 2013 stated that investment in international development serves both developing countries and the UK's national interests through 'market making' — creating markets for UK goods — and improving the UK's access to supplies. As such, DFID's perspective is that it is not possible to build a sustainable public sector without helping to build the private sector, including strengthening the tax base and broadening economic opportunities. DFID's role in this case is to support innovative investments and structures that can foster collaboration between the private sector in the UK and that in developing countries, as well as with governments so that more strategic ways to support national economies can be found. This is compatible with the interests of many young people who are in need of meaningful participation, productive work and entrepreneurship opportunities. Thus, the youth dividend in developing countries presents enormous opportunities for the private sector to invest in and work with young people in a number of ways.

In fact, according to the Bali Declaration, young people consider that governments should prioritize creation of jobs and a skilled workforce by stimulating investment from the public and private sector in programmes that foster youth entrepreneurship and build capacity. Specific interventions include job training using formal and non-formal curricula, education, vocational and employment counselling, quality paid internships, social protection, mentoring and expertise-sharing that will allow young people, in particular marginalized groups, to get the necessary information and skills to access decent work opportunities (ICPD, 2012).

An example of how development assistance resources can support the private sector to create decent work opportunities for youth can be found in the DFID-supported 'Trade and Global Value Chains' initiative, whereby the Waitrose Foundation, which is active in South Africa, is investing in improving the skills and job prospects of young people in the communities that support Waitrose supply chains (Gov.uk, 2013).

The Bali Declaration also highlights the right to decent work as a key issue for young people in the development agenda. It calls for governments to ensure the right to decent work for young people through effective policies and programmes that generate employment, which is stable, safe, secure, non-discriminatory, and provides a decent wage and opportunities for career development. It also highlights the particular discrimination faced by young women, calling on 'governments and the private sector [to] support young women's leadership in the workforce, thereby contributing to sustainable development' and to 'implement and enforce policies that address discrimination [against] young women in the labour market, including equal access to a range of educational and employment opportunities, with equal pay'.

The current level of unemployment among youth and their concentration in the informal sector is partially due to a mismatch between skills and education on the one hand, and employers' requirements, on the other hand. This can be addressed through cooperation, coordination and investment. Some private companies are already doing this as a way to curb youth unemployment. Working under the principle that developing the right skills will help you get a head start on your career, Microsoft's Students to Business initiative, for example, has linked approximately 15,000 students to internships and jobs with Microsoft's partners and customers in 65 nations (The Guardian, 2012). Further, the majority of young people in the developing world will not find employment within the large-scale formal economy, but will make their living through agriculture, work in the informal sector, and small business ownership. Private sector investment is essential not only for job creation, but also for supporting the development of skills and capabilities among young people that will enable economic growth. The Bali Declaration also calls for investment

‘from the private sector through programmes that foster youth entrepreneurship and provide job training, using formal and non-formal curricula, education, vocational and employment counselling’, and for the recognition of informal and undocumented work as work. The informal sector is also a reserve of young people’s ingenuity that can drive growth and open their own path out of poverty.

Strong legal frameworks and protected rights, guaranteed by young people’s access to government and decision-makers, create an enabling environment for private sector investment that supports income growth, infrastructure creation, and provision of work-related education. Thus, as the UK government further engages in this modality of development assistance, it will have an important role in ensuring that private sector involvement and trade is being conducted in a fair and equitable way by supporting adequate work conditions, minimum levels of social protection, and compliance with environmental standards

3 Why invest in young people?

This section brings together the most compelling evidence to argue that investing in young people is an effective, cost-efficient use of development assistance. Focusing on seven distinct, but interrelated issues, we discuss the principal benefits of investing in areas where prospects for young people are positive. We illustrate how targeted investment can generate important gains for young people today as they transition into adulthood and for future generations of young people. Likewise, improvements in the youth cohort translate into additional gains for the community and country as a whole. We discuss several challenges in these thematic areas where a lack of policy attention and funding could have dire consequences, but which strategic investment, policy commitments and the participation of young people can transform into opportunities.

Box 5: Youth and data

Effective development assistance must be built on solid evidence collected through rigorous and verifiable methods. The coordination of UK and international efforts to mainstream a youth-focused approach across sectors and invest in specific youth-focused programmes requires reliable data to direct efforts toward the most effective interventions.

A lack of data disaggregated by age and gender, however, is a global problem that affects the vast majority of youth-centred work, whether carried out by governments, NGOs or international development agencies (DFID-CSO, 2010; USAID, 2012). Projects that are not specifically youth-focused but that affect youth directly or indirectly, such as employment schemes, infrastructure development or the reintegration of combatants, do not regularly collect age-disaggregated data, thereby frustrating attempts to assess their consequences for young people. Robust data are necessary to set specific, measurable, attainable, and time-bound objectives to ensure the value for money of investing in youth (DFID-CSO, 2010). In 2005, the UN General Assembly issued a resolution calling on member states to produce “data and population statistics disaggregated by age and sex on all aspects of policy formulation by all countries” (UNGA, 2006). However, data disaggregation by age is still not the norm.

Many groups of young people are hard to reach and are often missed in data collection, especially those in rural areas, women, and people from minority backgrounds (World Bank, 2012a). Similarly to the way in which gender is often elided in data collection on employment, young people’s work may not appear in studies because it is often informal, undervalued or simply underestimated (UNFPA, 2010). In the wake of systemic shocks, such as wars, famines or economic downturns, there may be an increase in data collection by different actors. However, there is a dearth of long-term longitudinal studies that chart the impact of interventions, provide insight into successful work with young people in times of crisis, and allow analysis of young people’s paths out of poverty (World Bank, 2012a).

Improving the opportunities available to young people requires a global effort to increase the level and quality of data collection. There should be both global and national databases on young men and women, and data on young men and women should be routinely collected and analysed. Creating better monitoring and evaluation structures is also an opportunity to expand youth participation and build local capacity and skills. As participants and leaders in youth focused-development projects, young people can be trained to facilitate focus groups, collect and analyse data, and work with expert mapping and assessment teams (USAID, 2012). The use of information and communications technology (ICT), especially mobile phones, represents an opportunity to increase the involvement of young people in data collection. The combination of robust data collection and youth participation represents a unique opportunity to build new modalities of development programming that increase community ownership, involve beneficiaries as partners, and yield a measurable and enduring impact.

Underpinning the thematic analysis are inequalities, which pose a challenge to fighting poverty by reducing the impact economic growth has on poverty reduction (UN Task Team on the post 2015 UN

Development Agenda, 2012). Age is a vector of inequality, excluding millions of young women and men from access to resources, opportunities and decision-making, while further inequalities, based on gender, class or rural/urban location, for example, can compound these exclusions. Among the numerous inequalities faced by youth today, the most frequently highlighted in terms of their impact on individuals and development outcomes are inequalities in access to employment, education/skills/training, productive resources, social capital, health and decision-making (McAslan Fraser and McLean Hilker, 2012). Inequalities can be a source of social tension and even civic unrest.

Inequalities are shaped by factors such as gender, location (rural-urban), social status, politics, ethnicity and disability, amongst others. Young women are particularly disadvantaged by entrenched discriminatory social norms (Jones, et al., 2010). The existence of intersecting inequalities have cumulative, mutually-reinforcing effects that contribute to the systematic disadvantage of youth, not allowing them to benefit from general government programmes, or from the opportunities that might be generated through economic growth. In fact, inequalities of income and opportunity are a powerful barrier to poverty reduction and human development goals, and the unequal participation of youth limits their citizenship rights and fails to capture relevant voices for policy formulation.

Supporting opportunities of young people who experience specific obstacles, working with them as stakeholders, can be a way of expanding the reach of development assistance resources to achieve broad-based goals of poverty reduction and equitable growth. In each of the thematic areas we highlight some of the ways in which inequalities present obstacles for young people. Well planned and delivered investment can help unleash young people's potential to contribute to human, social, economic and environmental development objectives.

3.1 Post-primary education

Education is the foundation for increasing youth employment and enhancing young people's civic participation, both of which are instrumental for economic growth and social cohesion at the national level (World Bank, 2012b). The gains in primary education over the past decade, including the near attainment of gender parity (Marcus, et al., 2012), demonstrate the impact of targeted efforts under global frameworks like the MDGs and Education for All agenda (EFA). Youth is a time of important transitions including those from primary to secondary school, from education into employment and from dependency to responsibility as an adult, provider, caregiver and citizen. By adopting a stronger lifecycle approach, the same coordinated national and international effort that pushed primary education achievements can extend this success through the transition to secondary education, tertiary education (formal or informal), or technical and vocational training, and into employment. Beyond enrolment and attainment rates, the high quality and relevance of education are the keys to building the necessary skills for these transitions.

High-quality education is recognised as the best method of building the skills required to meet labour market challenges (UN-DESA, 2011). Comprehensive education should be inclusive of all young people, with particular attention paid to girls, young people living in rural areas, and vulnerable and marginalised groups who are the most likely to be out of school. It should cover all sectors, including vocational, technical, skills-based, and sexuality, and it should be delivered through formal, informal and non-formal systems (ICPD, 2012). Foundational skills of literacy and numeracy are necessary for meeting daily needs as well as finding employment and continuing in education. Schooling, including comprehensive sexuality and risk education, is essential for building life skills that guard against early pregnancy and HIV/AIDS as well as behaviours that gain prevalence in adolescence, such as smoking or alcohol consumption. Up to 70% of premature deaths result from risky behaviours begun in youth (USAID, 2012), some of which could be prevented with better sexual and reproductive (SRH) and general health education as part of the curriculum in schools or communicated through informal education (for example, youth clubs). Research has also found that engaging young people in organised and structured group activities, such as sports, arts or a youth groups can also be useful avenues reduce these risks (Cebulla and Tomaszewski, 2009). Fostering formal and non-formal education and structured activities for young people as a way to reduce risky behaviours would not only be an important human achievement, but would relieve important economic costs linked to such adolescent risk-taking. Cunningham, et al (2008) estimate that in Latin America, youth violence, teen pregnancy, STIs, and substance use together lower GDP by more than 1% annually. Quality, comprehensive education relevant to young people's lives can be an effective means of building resilience amongst youth and opening up alternative life paths that will enable them to better contribute to the development of their communities.

Lack of education is a major obstacle to obtaining decent work (Marcus and Gavrilovic, 2010). But it is not just any education, it is the lack of the right kind of education. There is a need for formal and informal education that focuses on the learning needs of all young people (UNESCO, 2012) acknowledging their different circumstances, starting points and their potential. It should focus on providing the skills that can offer all young people, including the disadvantaged, a chance of obtaining better jobs. The contemporary employment context puts youth at increased risk of undertaking informal, insecure and exploitative labour (UN-DESA, 2011). But in addition to formal education, life skills that enable problem solving, creativity, leadership and communication are key to smoothing the transition from education to employment. These skills also support young people in developing self-determination, enhancing their ability to participate in public life and engage in entrepreneurship, all of which would contribute to developing countries' economic gains and progress across other development objectives. While governments continue to play an instrumental role in providing secondary education to all students, coordination and technical support from the private sector, facilitated by development agencies as knowledge brokers, can improve the relevance of curricula, increase youth employability, and facilitate investment in education. Additionally, young people increasingly can and should play a role in the evaluation and review of educational programmes and in the development of curricula. At the post-secondary level, the role of development assistance, not only financing, but also technical assistance, is essential to strengthen tertiary education systems. Options for development include technical and vocational training (TVET) and informal education programmes coordinated among governments, NGOs and the private sector. These are not all consistently good, but existing evidence from evaluations of existing programmes can be used by governments, with donor support, to reform or redesign the approach that best fits the national context. For instance, in a review of policies to strengthen skills-employment linkages for marginalised young people in four countries (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan and Sierra Leone), Engel (2012) found that TVET systems are currently seen as inadequate in providing skills development for the modern economy. As a result, they are undergoing substantial reforms that aim to increase the scope of formal training and increase its relevance. While the focus of skills training and youth employment programmes varies significantly, in all four countries there has been a move to integrate skills training with work experience.

For many young people unable to access formal or non-formal education - particularly the poor, women, and marginalised groups – literacy and life skills education is essential to be able to make healthier and more productive decisions. UNESCO defines life skills as abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Life skills are thus abilities that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. This can enable them to make better use of their limited resources to improve their lives, and contribute to their families and communities. Literacy and life skills policy should be part of education sector planning, and supported through meaningful investments.

Inequalities in access to education, skills and training can perpetuate and exacerbate other disadvantages that young people face, linked to characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, poverty, language and disability. For example, young people with disabilities are amongst the most excluded 'poorest of the poor', regularly cut off from education opportunities, which can be aggravated by discrimination and social exclusion (McAslan Fraser and McLean Hilker, 2012). Although models for promoting inclusive primary education have been successful in improving access to schooling for marginalised and remotely located children, progress with secondary and post-secondary education remains slow. Enrolment of girls and young women drops off significantly after primary education. Similar effects are present for other marginalised groups including young people living with disability, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people, pregnant girls, married adolescents, and those living in conflict zones. Young people in poor households, where the labour of older children is valued over their education, do not complete the secondary education that would be instrumental for the acquisition of the life skills necessary to improve their long-term economic prospects. According to the 2012 EFA Report (UNESCO, 2012), if economically disadvantaged youth are to have similar chances as youth from rich backgrounds to gain access to good jobs on the basis of merit, secondary education has to be made more equitable and more inclusive, offering the widest possible range of opportunities in order to meet young people's differing abilities, interests and backgrounds. This is instrumental to achieving equity, which is a recognised development objective.

While supporting formal systems of post-secondary education is important, few countries have developed strategies to improve informal and non-formal training, which provide the vast majority of opportunities for developing applicable skills in most low-income countries (Engel, 2012). For example, an ADB survey found that 78% of skilled workers in manufacturing establishments received their skills informally on the

job (Comyn, 2009: 24, in Engel, 2012). Broadening the concept of education to include informal and transitional education into the formal system is thus crucial and should be supported through appropriate investments. Further, informal systems should have the flexibility to adapt to the educational needs of those for whom formal education is not available. Programmes to provide second chances for training and out-of-school opportunities, such as rural learning centres and peer education, can increase young people's chances of securing employment.

Education as part of humanitarian responses is another important area for investment. Conflict and natural disasters put millions of children and young people at risk on an annual basis. Community services and normal support, including education, are disrupted. While education can be a protective and life-sustaining intervention in this environment, 42% of the world's out-of-school children and young people, (over 28 million) are found in conflict-affected states (Save the Children, 2012). For example, thousands of young people in IDP camps throughout the world do not receive education for years at a time, resulting in a 'lost generation' of young people who are being denied their right to education and the opportunity to develop the tools to help themselves out of poverty and marginalisation as they transition into adulthood.

As the political activities of students demonstrate, education develops the ability to participate in social life beyond the family. By fostering creative thinking and social interaction, schools are the incubators of tomorrow's citizens. Education promotes interaction with government and civil society, collective bargaining with employers, and creativity in developing solutions to social problems (ILO, 2012). Students' active role in social and political movements also demonstrates young people's capacity to give back to society and contribute to the process of setting priorities and policy. As much as education must build basic skills and skills relevant to attaining employment, it must also serve young people's need to engage with the world around them and create a pathway for young people to increase their involvement in and beyond their communities. This will not only be beneficial for them, but it can also contribute to active citizenship and engagement in governance and accountability processes in their countries, contributing to social cohesion and promoting good governance.

Where education is not responsive to employers' requirements, highly educated young people still struggle to find work and remain dependent on their families or the state (in the exceptional cases of developing countries with broader state welfare systems) and face increased chances of falling into risky behaviour. Many recent protest movements, from the Arab Spring to the Canadian student strikes, include high unemployment among educated youth as contributing factors. As such, investing in relevant education that can better lead to employment should be one important axis of the UK government's strategy for conflict prevention and stability. A smooth transition through education to employment and through youth to adulthood depends on the applicability of education to daily life.

Communication technology plays an important role in young people's lives and their education. Despite inequalities in access to more expensive technology, young people are early adopters in both their educational and leisure activities (UN-DESA, 2010). ICT represents the one of the greatest growth areas for youth employment and its integration into curricula is essential to provide the skills required by the modern labour market, creating paths out of poverty and enabling mobility (UN-DESA, 2011; UNICEF, 2012b). However, ICT is only part of an education strategy that requires clear prioritisation of literacy, numeracy, problem solving, active citizenship, health and other transferable skills. Education is also important to better manage the environment so that young people can contribute to climate change mitigation and environmental risk reduction in their communities. The transition to a Green Economy also offers young people important work opportunities in new areas within agriculture, industry, research and development, services, and administration that can contribute to preserving or restoring the quality of the environment. As an important growth sector, building skills and providing relevant education for young people in this area is essential.

3.2 Work

Currently, half the world's unemployed are young people and youth are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults (GIZ; UNESCO, 2012). When young people are able to find work, many, especially women and those from marginalised groups, are more likely to work in the informal sector or in unsafe and exploitative conditions. Disproportionate youth unemployment is a global phenomenon, affecting high income countries (HICs) and low income countries (LICs) alike. Global youth unemployment is 12.6% compared to the adult rate of 4.8% (UN-DESA, 2012). Despite the growing youth

population, overall, youth labour force participation is declining, which hides rising youth unemployment (UNDESA, 2012)).

Youth unemployment and situations in which young people work under poor conditions incur social as well as economic costs. Youth unemployment has been shown to be closely linked to social exclusion, as the inability to find employment creates a sense of uselessness and idleness among young people. Reducing unemployment will result in important human gains to young people themselves and social gains to their communities. Additionally, an important economic gain is recapturing the productive potential of underutilized youth. Idle youth are not contributing to the economic welfare of their country. The loss of income among the younger generation translates into a lack of savings as well as a loss of aggregate demand (ILO, 2012b). The cost of youth unemployment to the global economy is huge. For example, a recent report that estimates aggregate earnings losses to youth unemployment in Europe, the US and Canada, finds that Ireland's youth job losses will impose the heaviest burden, with an estimated impact of roughly 12% of the country's GDP over the next two decades. Spain and Greece follow, with lower, but still significant impacts (TD Economics, 2013).

While the size of the current youth population has the potential to be transformed into a demographic dividend through a growing ratio of working age adults to dependent population (lower dependency ratio), reaping the benefits of this declining dependency burden depends on the level of investment to foster the development of more employment opportunities, improvements in public health, gender equity and improved educational outcomes for young people (UNFPA, 2010). This is one of the most powerful arguments for investing in creating economic opportunities for young people. By investing in youth employment, donors can facilitate progress not only in poverty reduction, but also in health and gender equity. However, seizing the demographic bonus is highly dependent on youth being supported to find work that provides a decent wage and is stable, safe, secure and non-discriminatory. For this purpose, investment in human and physical capital is required, for which relevant life-skills and post-secondary are instrumental, as discussed above. The window of falling dependency rates can be open for about 40 years, depending on how quickly fertility rates decline, which means that young people today will influence the shape of the economy for at least two generations. Youth employment initiatives achieve the greatest impact when accurately targeted at the most disadvantaged youth and in countries that are developing or in transition (Betcherman et al. 2007). Strong evaluations are essential to achieving value for investment, but the majority of programmes suffer from inadequate or absent data collection and monitoring processes. Providing training is the most popular form of employment intervention, but to be successful, such programmes must be responsive to private sector needs and local market realities

Generating decent work and entrepreneurship opportunities can capitalise on young people's natural inquisitiveness and be harnessed for growth. In order to promote equitable work opportunities, it is important to focus on particular groups of young people that are prone to exploitation, including young women, undocumented or migrant workers, and other marginalised groups. Employment is an important vector of social inclusion, not just through wages, but through identity and social access (World Bank, 2012b; interviews with W. Cunningham and J. Dyson). Governments have a role to play in ensuring the rights of young people at work are adhered to, including the right to fair hiring, and to join and organise labour unions, consistent with international conventions (Bali, 2012).

In countries emerging from conflicts, helping young people realise their full potential by gaining access to employment should form a key component of any peace-building process. In countries that have been involved in violent conflict, youth employment is a precondition for poverty eradication, sustainable development, and lasting peace (World Bank, 2008).

Youth unemployment poses a number of challenges, which can include civil unrest, risky behaviours such as alcohol and smoking, and even unsafe or coerced sex. Most importantly, it misses out on the huge opportunities for both individuals and society to develop human capital of the youth (Cunningham et al., 2008). It is therefore important to prevent the creation of 'lost generations' who have lost the capacity or have not had the enabling environments necessary to enter into decent work alternatives during the course of their lifetime.

There is a need for urgent action to recognise the skills and potential of young people in the developing world and equip them with the means to develop their entrepreneurial potential. Adequate training that matches the demands of the private sector and access to funding are both needed to help integrate young people into employment opportunities or teach them how to create and manage their own micro-enterprises. Entrepreneurship and sustainable businesses generate economic growth and jobs for young women and men, as well as stimulating structural change and innovation. One of the major obstacles for

successful youth entrepreneurship creation and expansion is the missing link between financial and non-financial services. Entrepreneurial and technical training must be combined with adequate financial services in order to deliver the full potential in terms of results. However, available financial services are often not sufficiently accessible to youth, who are perceived as a high credit risk due to their lack of collateral, limited experience and young age (Hribernigg, 2011). Some initiatives have been tackling this problem in an effective way, providing good practice examples of how to improve young people's access to financial markets. For instance, ensuring that young people have access to finance to start up a business is a core principle of Youth Business International (YBI), a global network of independent non-profit initiatives that help young people to start and grow their own business and create employment. This can include government finance, bank loans or a loan or grant from the local YBI programme. Local conditions determine how finance is accessed. The terms of the loan facilitated through YBI recognise that young businesses might have teething problems and should not be penalised for this so that the young person does not suffer unduly should their business fail (Chambers and Lake, 2002). In 2011, YBI member NGOs disbursed US\$72 million of collateral-free loans to young people, with an interest rate below commercial rates and an average size of US\$10,000⁶. Aid resources thus can play an important role in the promotion and expansion of such youth centred NGOs, generating significant economic gains for young people and for society.

The dearth of work opportunities already poses a huge impact on youth who need to earn an income for themselves, but many young men and women are heads of family from a young age, so finding sustainable livelihoods is about reducing poverty for young families. Although promoting economic growth is an important measure to generate employment, there is a limit on how many jobs that growth alone can deliver. Entrepreneurship is thus instrumental as a means to decent work.

Entrepreneurship and sustainable businesses generate economic growth and jobs for young women and men, and they stimulate structural change and innovation. Innovation and economic growth will depend on future leaders with entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Youth entrepreneurship is a key tool to develop the human capital necessary for the future, unleash the economic potential of youth, and promote sustainable growth. Many different initiatives exist to promote youth entrepreneurship, from providing training to young people who want to start their own business to venture capital funds helping to promote these businesses, yet little is known about what works best – and, in particular, what works best in different contexts. Operating context is critical to impact, yet there is very little understanding of how context affects impact in practice, or how interventions should be adapted to maximise impact, especially in the youth entrepreneurship sector. Development assistance resources aimed at plugging those information gaps, such as the case of the research project 'Maximising the impact of youth entrepreneurship support in different contexts'⁷ can be a useful way to improve investment in youth entrepreneurship.

Box 6: Collaboration between a UN agency, aid resources and government to foster youth entrepreneurship

Like many other countries, Côte d'Ivoire is facing the difficult issue of how to create jobs for the country's young population. In 2008 Côte d'Ivoire had more than four million unemployed youth out of a total population of 21 million. The unemployment rate was 24.2% among 15-24-year olds, and 17.5% among 25-35-year olds. The 2011 post-election crisis has worsened the situation.

Young people have limited access to employment and are excluded from credit with which to finance income-generating activities. However, Côte d'Ivoire has many young graduates who have come through the basic education system and undergone vocational training, so providing these young people with access to decent and sustainable jobs is a key priority for the government.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has created a support mechanism to help integrate young people into the job market. Taking into account the limited absorptive capacities of the public sector and the formal labour markets, youth entrepreneurship is a viable option to create employment. Its programme, La Chaîne de l'Emploi (The Employment Chain) combines vocational and entrepreneurship training with access to funding in order to create income-generating activities.

⁶ <http://www.youthbusiness.org/how-we-work/the-return/>

⁷ <http://www.odi.org.uk/projects/2557-maximising-impact-youth-entrepreneurship-support-different-contexts>

Skills provided through this initiative enable young people to engage in specific occupations and find work in private companies through internships and training programmes. As part of this approach, a support fund for youth entrepreneurship has been established to provide access to finance for micro-projects with a high value added. UNIDO, with funding from the government of Austria and local Ivoirian partners, including the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Crafts and SME Promotion, the Ministry of Youth, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Côte d'Ivoire, have established Le Fonds d'Appui à l'Entreprenariat des Jeunes (Youth Business Fund). The fund grants repayable loans to promising young entrepreneurs, aged 16 to 35, to help them establish their micro-projects, while providing them with the necessary entrepreneurship training, technical assistance and coaching over a period of 14 months.

Eligible projects include those focusing on craft production, the production of intermediate and finished products, food processing, and communications. In May 2012, the promoters of the selected 150 projects began their training programme. On completion of the programme, the best 100 – a selection based on the potential profitability of the project and the market demand for its services – will receive a loan of up to a maximum sum of €7,500.

Source: Doris Hribernigg, Creating Jobs through Youth Entrepreneurship in Côte d'Ivoire

<http://www.businessfightspoverty.org/profiles/blogs/doris-hribernigg-youth-entrepreneurship-in-c-te-d-ivoire-the>

Governments, NGOs and the private sector can work with young people who live in different circumstances to find solutions that are appropriate to their needs and their lives, mitigating the reach of inequalities in the area of employment and opportunity. In addition to micro-entrepreneurship, these might include non-traditional employment opportunities (Interview with Hartley, March 2013), which draw on the competitive advantage of specific groups of young men and women and can contribute to a sustainable way for them to develop their livelihoods, and should be supported. An important fact is that the livelihoods of a huge number of young people in the developing world depend on agriculture – for example, up to 65% of African youth are employed primarily in agriculture (World Bank, 2008). As such, development assistance focused on promoting trade, open markets, micro-finance for young farmers to be able to invest in their lands, amongst other interventions is instrumental to supporting the decent livelihoods of many young people.

Some of the solutions that can come from support for educational investments, whether from development assistance or the private sector, include support for youth entrepreneurship, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, training contracts and other non-traditional routes into employment (ILO, 2012). ICT represents an important opportunity for employment among youth. However, access to ICT is uneven and user support and training should be locally available.

3.3 Sexual reproductive health and healthy lives

Young women throughout the developing world face significant challenges in the fulfilment of their sexual and reproductive health rights, and it is one of the main exacerbating factors linked to gender inequality (UNFPA, 2010). Girls and young women are disproportionately affected by sexual and reproductive health challenges when they are unable to exercise decisions over their sexual and reproductive health in the context of gender-based power imbalances and discriminatory social norms and institutions (Jones et al., 2010). Inadequate or unequal access to education contributes to this challenge. Young women are thus denied their rights to determine their own sexual and reproductive health choices. Early and forced marriage, unplanned pregnancy and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases undermine young women's progress in education, cut off their access to better work opportunities, and generate enormous costs to their health that also affect their families, partners, and the next generation.

A multi-country study by Chabaan and Cunningham (2011) calculate the economic costs of girls' and young women's exclusion in terms of early school dropout, joblessness, and unplanned or unwanted pregnancy to measure the depletion of human capital. They show that investing in girls so that they can complete the next level of education would lead to significant lifetime earnings that translate into higher GDP. In Burundi, for example, if today's cohort of girls were to complete an additional level of secondary education, their lifetime earnings would be equivalent to 68% of the country's annual GDP, with significant knock-on effects for economic growth.

There is a strong push by donors to achieve the MDGs on gender equality, health and maternal and child mortality, progress on which is lagging behind that for the other MDGs. In particular, the MDG target on Universal Access to Reproductive Health, was only added into the MDG framework in 2007 and is considerably behind the other goals. Other targets on MNCH and HIV/AIDS are also lagging behind despite significant political commitment, and it will be key to the post-2015 agenda that these goals are continued and strengthened so as not to lose what progress has been made.

In addition to sexual and reproductive health, young people have a basic right to lead healthy and productive lives. 'Staying Healthy' was, in fact, one of the Bali Declaration's themes. Young people agreed that governments need to work in partnership with them to ensure equitable and affordable access to comprehensive health services, which are currently not available to most young people.

Some of the health challenges faced by young people in particular include tobacco use, drug use, excessive alcohol consumption, unprotected sexual behaviour that increases the likelihood of sexually transmitted diseases, and inadequate diet and physical activity. These behaviours affect young people while they are still young, but many of the most significant adverse consequences show up when they grow older, in the form of non-communicable diseases such as lung cancer, diabetes, and heart disease (World Bank, 2007). Risky behaviour during youth can deplete productive human capital many years into the future.

3.4 Sustainability

Climate change is one of the main challenges of the 21st century, with a global impact and global solutions, but developing countries are likely to be among the most seriously affected by and the least able to address the consequences of climate change. Although climate change affects individuals of all ages, young people can expect to bear a particularly heavy burden because they will live longer and will face this challenge throughout their lifetimes (UN-DESA, 2010).

Young people's livelihoods are affected by climate in many different ways, particularly in rural areas, but also in urban high-risk areas (such as settlements along river beds). Young people – particularly young men – who are more mobile migrate nationally or internationally in search of better opportunities, but often end up in precarious settlements in peri-urban areas that pose significant risks to their health and wellbeing.

Yet youth are instrumental to altering the trajectory of climate change through knowledge and action. Young people need to be well-informed about climate change science and mitigation options and to be made aware of the consequences of their consumption behaviour so that they can play a strong role in combating climate change and promoting changes in attitudes and behaviours (UNDESA, 2010). Through formal and informal education and access to information, including through ICT and media outlets such as radio, television and the internet, young people are in a position to understand and improve resource management. This can result in knowledge-sharing with their communities about how to better manage climate change mitigation and adaptation and reduce costly exposure to such risks. Education and training in the field of climate change can also prepare young people to take advantage of new employment opportunities arising from the shift to a greener economy.

Box 7: Young people's involvement in climate change mitigation in Viet Nam

ODI undertook a small scale participatory research project in eastern Viet Nam to understand young people's perceptions of climate change and their involvement in preventive actions against effects of severe weather events triggered which are believed to be triggered in part by climate change. Research was undertaken in the eastern coastal district of Hau Loc in Thanh Hoa Province, an area known for its vulnerability to natural disasters, such as typhoons, floods and droughts, all of which occur on an annual basis.

Young participants at both sites explained that unexpected weather changes and extreme events over the past decade have caused many problems for young people and their families, especially with agriculture production and fisheries, resulting in crop failure and the abandonment of crop lands. Hurricanes and floods exacerbate these problems, causing long-lasting damage to agriculture and livelihoods.

'Ever since the storm went through my house and flooded the area here in 2005, when we grow crops, the productivity is not as good as in the past years' (Female, 23 years old, Da Loc).

In one of the localities researched, CARE has been helping the community to plant a mangrove forest in the coastal area as a sustainable way of protecting the sea dyke against the effects of typhoons. Young people have been particularly involved in these activities. All dykes were destroyed by the heavy waves of the 2005 typhoon, except a 500-metre section behind a mangrove forest. This was identified as a good intervention.

Young people are considered adept at organising propaganda campaigns for awareness-raising activities and for participating in community efforts to prevent and mitigate natural disasters. In the two communities, the youth union has developed entry points for young people to participate in decision-making processes at commune level, including in relation to adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Source: Perezniето et al., 2011

Climate finance is a growing development assistance modality, with a strong focus on green growth — i.e., sectors of the economy that can generate innovative solutions for climate mitigation and sustainability. Economic opportunities for preserving and restoring the quality of the environment can be found in agriculture, industry, research and development, services, and administration. Young people who are looking for training and work opportunities, and who are open to innovation and new knowledge are well suited to take up jobs in this sector.

While climate change did not have high profile in the MDGs, it is one of the most salient areas in the post-2015 agenda and SDG discussion, and one for which there is growing support from developed and donor nations. Given the role young people can play in climate change prevention, mitigation and development of innovative solutions, youth should be central to planning and investments in relation to climate change.

3.5 Conflict and crime

Violence and conflict can affect young people in multiple ways. Firstly, witnessing and living through violence can result in displacement and trauma. In and out of wars or civil conflict, young people, particularly the most marginalised, can also be involved in interpersonal violence, causing loss of livelihoods, opportunities and social cohesion. There is evidence of strong linkages between poverty, lack of opportunities, inadequate education, and violence amongst youth, resulting in a negative cycle that entrenches the disadvantages of marginalised youth (McLean Hilker and Fraser, 2009). Despite their exposure to violence, youth should not be defined as 'violent' — most young people do not get involved in violence and can make a positive contribution to peace-building and development.

There is statistical evidence of a connection between high relative youth populations and risk of armed conflict. This can therefore indicate which countries are likely to be at higher risk of violent conflict and provide one means for prioritising when and where governments and other partners should engage with youth to take preventative action. However, these statistical relations have some limitations which need to be recognised. The key issue is to figure out how this dynamic can be transformed.

Investing resources in young people can improve national security and lessen a country's exposure to civil disorder and possibly armed conflict. Young people are disproportionately the victims and perpetrators of violence, which is linked, as mentioned above, to a number of socio-economic factors (UNPFA, 2010). In addition to the social costs of conflict and violence, there are important economic costs (Cunningham et al., 2008; UNPFA, 2010). For example, in Latin America the costs of violent acts committed by young people ages 15–24 reach 1.4% of annual GDP as a result of forgone output from premature death, lower productivity at work, and forgone lifetime productivity associated with incarceration (Cunningham, et al., 2008).

Acting on the link between youth populations and instability means tackling exclusion, supporting the creation of opportunities for education and employment, addressing past inequalities and promoting transparent and accountable governance (McLean Hilker and Fraser, 2009). Thus, investments that help young people meet their socio-economic demands, including those for equity, better governance, greater social cohesion, higher-quality education and more income generating opportunities can have benefits to

national security and lessening exposure to civil disorder and even armed conflict nationally and globally. Further, with adequate educational and technical support, young people can be change agents, working as partners for peace-building in conflict affected countries.

The Bali Declaration affirms that all forms of violence, including harmful traditional practices, psychological, physical, sexual and gender-based violence, are an abuse of human rights, and must be addressed, in particular by repealing laws and policies that permit violence and/or discrimination against young people, especially those who are marginalised. Additionally, young people should have access to workplaces, education and health services that free from coercion, discrimination, violence and stigma (ICPD, 2012).

3.6 Civic engagement

Youth are the future of our societies, active shapers of their own communities, as teachers, voters and leaders (DFID/CSO Youth Working Group, 2010). Adult civic participation is determined by participation habits developed during youth and is positively correlated with education level and employment status (World Bank, 2007). Supporting young people to engage socially, politically and economically and creating opportunities for them to contribute to development processes not only creates the most effective policy, but also helps to build a generation of invested and productive citizens.

However, young people's engagement in policymaking can be inhibited by traditional, customary and legal structures that do not value youth perspectives. Perceived primarily as dependent or inexperienced, young people often figure erroneously in development policy as a problem to be addressed rather than having their interests or viewpoints represented by policy makers. For example, less than half of African youth have confidence in the honesty of elections. Youth voter turnout has declined since 2000 across the continent, except in Tanzania, Uganda and Malawi (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2012). Dramatic examples of youth engagement in political and social processes, such as the Arab Spring, are often treated as threats to stability rather than opportunities to harness the creative input of young people and their energy to transform societies and promote democracy. Young people are frequently barred from taking part in formal policy or democratic processes by age limits that restrict them from holding office or by structural barriers to entry into political participation. Fostering youth participation is a bulwark for democracy and an opportunity to harness the creative contributions of the next generation.

Box 8: Opportunities for youth in northern Uganda

Two decades of insurgency, instability, and conflict led to high rates of poverty in northern Uganda. By 2005, a measure of peace and stability had returned to the region, allowing for the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and other war-affected populations. In 2006, the government launched the Youth Opportunities Program to stimulate income generation and employment growth among young adults aged 16 to 35. The program provided cash grants for vocational training and business materials to groups of participants with successful grant proposals. Groups had an average of 22 members, and most expressed interest in tailoring, carpentry, metalwork, mechanics, or hairdressing.

An evaluation two years after the intervention found increased investment in skills and participation in skilled work, resulting in greater incomes and higher savings.

Grantees were 4% more likely to attend community meetings and 9% more likely to be community mobilizers. Participants also reported receiving more social support from their family and the community. Furthermore, men who received grants reported a 31% decline in aggressive behaviour relative to the control group. This finding is consistent with theories that link aggression to stress levels, low social standing, and perceived injustice— all potentially alleviated by higher employment and incomes.

Source: Blattman, Fiala, and Martinez, 2011

Youth-focused strategies must be renewable and funding durable to ensure that changing youth interests are identified and addressed over time. The current youth bulge in Asia, North Africa and Latin America

will be repeated in the coming generation in Africa. Development agencies and international organisations are aware that youths are essential beneficiaries and partners in development – as illustrated by the greater visibility of youth participation in high level consultations in the post-2015 process and a growing number of youth-focused strategies among major donors. National and international frameworks are required to provide mechanisms for governments, the private sector, the UN and other international institutions to enable youth to participate in all levels of decision-making and create applicable and effective programmes that will help them, their communities and society generally. The Bali Declaration calls for recognition of existing and potential youth leadership that is representative of their numbers and diversity.

Capitalising on the youth dividend is not just a question of mobilising available labour, but relying on youth to guide the way toward opportunities for peace, growth and development. Young people have direct experience of the current context of rapidly changing social and political relations as well as the increasing speed and availability of information. The post-2015 agenda is a chance to learn lessons from the marginalisation of today's youth and put in place mechanisms that can enable them to provide greater opportunities for their successors.

Promoting good governance has emerged as a major concern in the post-2015 agenda, as its absence undermines accountability and transparency, and it adds unnecessary and often illegal costs to interventions, reducing their value for money. Young people have also recognised governance as critical issue in both the post-2015 consultation with youth (DFID/CSO Working Group, 2013) and in the Bali Global Youth Forum. Young people spoke about the need for agents of governance to be held accountable, including elected leaders, and highlighted the need for fair representation of all population groups, for marginalised groups (gender, youth, people with disabilities and others) to be actively participating in law and decision-making and establish programmes to encourage active citizenship and knowledge of rights, particularly for young people. Young people who are already participating can and should have a role in enhancing governance and accountability, which can contribute from the grassroots to the efforts donors are making to improve governance.

An enabling environment for youth participation requires ingrained mechanisms for youth consultation, opportunities for youth leadership and effective targeting of young people for interventions. The latter is particularly important as the provision and protection of basic needs and rights is the necessary foundation for youth participation. Young people's participation is most significant at the grassroots levels where they know their context and can best contribute to solutions and forward planning with innovative ideas, reflecting the views a significant share of the population. High-level youth forums and online consultation projects are an important means of channelling youth voices, but tend primarily to reach those already privileged and engaged. Rather, youth voices must be integrated throughout policy, programming and implementation, sharing decision-making and increasing accountability (DFID CSO, 2010). Youth are not a homogenous group and significant inequalities marginalise many from established mechanisms of participation. Young women, urban poor, rural and ethnic minority young people are among those populations whose contributions need to be actively sought and supported. Empowerment activities, including leadership training, can help overcome inequalities. Additionally, political reform among governments and international organizations should be undertaken to remove the legal, policy and regulatory barriers that hinder the meaningful participation and empowerment of young people to exercise and claim their rights (ICPD, 2012). Linked with education, employment training, out-of-school groups, sports and cultural activities, youth engagement can build cross-generational partnerships, foster capacity building and help to increase the voice of vulnerable and marginalised youth.

4 Youth and the post-2015 agenda

Youth are central to the achievement of the MDGs. In the run-up to 2015, there is a stronger push to achieve them, and an international commitment to focus support on policies and programmes targeted toward young people can move us closer to success.

Several of the goals, including those related to education and employment attainment, maternal health and child mortality (via adolescent pregnancy), gender equality, and combating HIV/AIDS relate to issues that affect predominantly young people (UNFPA, 2010). Continued donor investment in policies and programmes that have worked - for example social protection programmes aimed at reducing income poverty while improving human development outcomes for children and young people- whether directly, through programme and budget support, or indirectly by supporting NGOs and the private sector - is therefore crucial to meeting the goals. In the run-up to 2015, there is a stronger push to achieve them, and an international commitment to focus support on policies and programmes targeted toward young people can move us closer to success.

The time is ripe to ensure that priorities critical to the progress of young people over the next 20 years are part of the post-2015 agenda, particularly leading up to the May 2013 High Level Panel meeting, where initial agreements about the themes to be included may be reached. Currently, the thematic areas that feature prominently in discussions around the agenda include growth and employment; health (including sexual and reproductive health); education (with a stronger focus on quality of education and post-primary education); governance; peace and security; and continued poverty reduction.

The Rio+20 Conference confirmed a common global vision for an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for the planet, underlining that many challenges remain to be addressed. Rio+20 recognised the green economy as an important pathway for achieving sustainable development and eradicating poverty; set in motion a process to develop universal sustainable development goals (SDGs); and agreed to take action towards sustainable development (EC, 2013).

Although these post-2015 and SDG processes are currently parallel, there has been a strong push toward convergence of these agendas, recognising the fundamental link between poverty reduction, environmental sustainability and economic growth, which can be seen as the pillars of the sustainable development agenda: economic development, environmental sustainability and social inclusion (Sachs, 2012).

Where does youth fit into this post-2015/SDG agenda? In developing countries, the youth bulge discussed in section one is going to continue for the next 15 years, while trends in population growth in lower-income countries, urbanisation and migration, largely driven by young people, will be challenges affecting many aspects of development planning. At the same time, because one-third of the world's population is currently between 15 and 24, their transition to adulthood over the next 10 to 15 years presents a critical window for developing human capital, nurturing respect for the environment, and promoting active citizenship and participation in the workforce. Seizing this opportunity to achieve economic growth, reduce poverty, and ensure environmental sustainability could establish a positive trajectory for children throughout the developing world as they transition to youth, with more equitable opportunities for development than those that young people have today.

Although the goals that are agreed from 2015 might remain thematic rather than focus on any population subgroups, youth - like gender - needs to remain a cross-cutting issue so that the different themes are seen through a youth lens. Setting a specific target for youth, possibly related to employment, equality, opportunities and participation, would be a way to ensure their visibility. This target would require data for different age groups in order to have a baseline and measure progress. Since such data is currently inadequate, there should be an important push by stakeholders to finance the collection of relevant data on youth, including with young people's participation. This youth focused target should reflect the current constraints faced by young people - for example, the over representation of youth amongst the world's unemployed.

Because inequality of any type presents fundamental barriers for young men and women to be able to develop, become active citizens and economic actors, and contribute to their own and their communities' development, the long-term costs and consequences of persistent youth inequality are enormous. This

can be a catalyst for action both for and with youth, which would also engender clear gains in the short- and medium-term.

Let us consider a potential thematic area of a post-2015 agenda — growth and employment — through a youth lens. As discussed in section 3, youth unemployment is a global challenge, with youth over-represented amongst the unemployed. In order to transform the potential of the ‘youth bulge’ into a ‘youth dividend,’ with significant contributions to economic growth in the next 15 to 20 years, focusing on effective education and job creation for young people is paramount. Ensuring the sexual and reproductive health of young people – particularly young women – is also critical, because young women who are better able to control their reproductive decisions will be more economically empowered. Economic growth is also fuelled by improvements in the quality of education and assurance of equitable access to secondary and post-secondary education, which is essential to the development of young people’s human capital. If the goals agreed are at a macro level – such as fostering employment – a specific target on youth employment would be required. Similarly, while a goal on public health might be agreed, it is critical that targets under this goal include progress in sexual and reproductive health for both young men and young women.

Two additional areas for which the transformational potential of young people needs to be harnessed are governance and peace and security. Related to the other thematic areas, particularly education, equality in opportunities, and employment, young people play an important role in social cohesion. This was explored in sections 2 and 3, but is important to highlight: young people are important partners in the pursuit of peace and security. Also, ensuring that young people today are guaranteed the enabling environment to exercise their citizenship can be instrumental in promoting good governance, as young people are increasingly active in holding their own governments to account, from the grassroots upward. This implies that if a goal on improving governance and accountability through strong partnerships is agreed, targets need to specifically include greater youth civic participation.

Achieving many of these goals is not a task for governments in developed and developing countries alone, though they have a central role. Civil society – including young people – and the private sector are also instrumental to achieve progress. In particular, the private sector is essential to promoting employment, either through small and large companies or through the financial sector, which facilitates self-employment. In order to promote the potential for youth to engage more actively in new and existing productive sectors depending on the context such as ICT, green growth, small enterprises, and trade, the role of the private sector and how to foster investment (that drives growth and creates jobs) also needs to be featured as part of the post-2015 agenda (Lucci, 2013).

In moving along the SDG/post-2015 trajectory, young people must be partners and active agents from the earliest consultations to programme rollout. The current consultation process for the post-2015 agenda has already created interesting spaces for young people to voice their priorities, including through the participation of youth activists in the High Level Panel meetings, and in online and other consultations that have taken place in countries. Box 7 presents the main outcomes of a global consultation with young people organised by the DFID/CSO Youth Working Group through its partner organisations in country.

Ultimately, there is growing consensus that the post-2015 agenda needs to have a clear focus on young people, not only by having youth-specific goals and targets, but also by ensuring that key areas are seen through a youth lens.

Box 9: Youth consultations on youth participation in development planning and implementation

A number of high-profile meetings with young people from around the world have taken place to give voice to youth viewpoints on the post-2015 agenda. These include the ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Youth Forum, young people’s participation in three post 2015 UN High Level Panel Meetings and the Youth Consultations for a Post-2015 Framework organised by the DFID/CSO Youth Working Group. Young people have called for an increase in their cohort’s participation in the design, delivery and evaluation of development policy to increase the appropriateness and effectiveness of interventions. Going forward, it will be important to follow up on the role young people take at all levels, and the impacts that their proposals have on individuals and on society more generally.

High Level Panel Meetings

There were three UN High Level Panel Youth Sessions. In November 2012 in London, young people participated in a roundtable session with panellists focusing on addressing 'Household Poverty' through the post-2015 framework. Participants reflected on their lived experiences of household poverty in their own national contexts and used this to frame discussion with panellists. Two principles were established during the meeting: (1) Inclusion: as the largest demographic group, young people will be the difference between the success and failure of any global commitments made; (2) Innovation: Young people bring nuanced perspectives, fresh solutions and insights to persistent national and global challenges.

In January 2013 in Monrovia, the theme was 'National Building Blocks for Sustained Prosperity'. Youth participants discussed what they felt to be the main barriers and enablers to positive economic transformation in their countries. In the roundtable with panellists they identified four pillars for inclusive economic transformation:

1. Active and dignified insertion of youth in the workplace ensuring them a good wage and jobs;
2. Quality, relevant education;
3. Social dialogue to facilitate a successful matching of labour demand and supply;
4. Access to resources, in particular land and finance.

In Bali, in March 2013, the theme of meeting was 'Global Partnerships and Means of Implementation'. A key area of focus for the youth roundtable was accountability. Participants highlighted that young people can and should be effective monitors in development, with an important role to play in data collection and analysis to ensure all stakeholders are fully accountable for their post-2015 commitments.

Global Consultations on the post 2015 framework

A coalition of youth-focused/led organisations, led by Restless Development, coordinated a series of consultations, run in twelve countries, from October 2012 to January 2013 with the aim of understanding better young people's views on what should come after the Millennium Development Goals. 346 young people were given the space to discuss the local and global issues of importance to them, and articulate their solutions and visions for a world beyond 2015. Young people expressed strong and concrete recommendations for reducing barriers to youth participation in governance and civil society; enabling access to resources, education and employment; and exercising their rights to health, safety and a secure future. Some of the key points from the consultation are presented below.

Removing Barriers

Challenging cultural and legal barriers to young people's social, political and economic engagement, especially for marginalised groups and women, is a fundamental priority for youth representatives. Key recommendations include raising awareness of these barriers and youth issues generally, creating opportunities for national and international collaboration across generational divides, and empowering young people and marginalised groups to increase civic participation and accountability. Fighting corruption, improving accountability, establishing legal regimes to protect rights and individual determination, and increasing the inclusive and representative nature of governments are seen as routes to addressing inequalities and improving civic engagement. Importantly, young people recognize the requirement of access to comprehensive and quality information to enable these reforms.

Governance

Young people look to governments and international organisations to improve accountability on legal commitments such as human rights. The consultations illustrated that youth participation in governance and leadership is essential to hold decision-makers to account. Meaningful youth participation from the local to the international level, especially the inclusion of youth-focused and youth-led civil society organisations, is necessary to ensure the civil rights of young people. The development of leadership skills through education, employment and access to resources as well as specific capacity development interventions, such as peer-support programmes and services for young entrepreneurs, can only be realised in a context of protected basic rights to health and safety and freedom from discrimination. Youth are key stakeholders in peace-building and increased civic participation of young people, especially

women and youth from minority cultures, supports conflict prevention and resolution. Addressing gender-based violence is a necessary component of youth engagement in governance and peace-building.

Health

The right to healthcare is of particular importance to young people. In addition to reducing barriers to access to healthcare for all people, young people are committed to reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS and addressing its impact. Young people advocate increased access to information and education on sexuality and reproductive health, including safe abortion and family planning. An important aspect of reducing barriers to accessing healthcare is reducing the influence of traditional institutions that entrench harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, and providing legal services and counselling resources to victims.

Education

Youth representatives urged governments and international actors to increase access to education along two streams: (1) adopting a rights-based approach that emphasizes removing discriminatory barriers to education, especially for women and girls, and (2) promoting a range of alternative education opportunities, including informal and non-formal education, vocational centres, polytechnics, extracurricular activities and youth-focused programmes. They emphasize the need for increased quality in education through better teacher training, more advanced technological resources, and improved infrastructure, such as toilets, electricity and water. Finally, young people advocate improving the relevance of education toward building skills required by employers and developing capabilities for everyday life, such as financial management. Overall, youths see education as a primary means of producing engaged and productive citizens.

Employment

Employment is a primary concern for young people and their recommendations revolve around increasing access through developing appropriate skills and reducing significant barriers to obtain work and advance in it. Young people are committed to smoothing the transition from education to employment by reducing restrictions on financing that would allow youths to attain appropriate skills; replacing exclusionary practices like unpaid internships with paid positions and work experience programmes; and increasing access to and use of information technology and other skills relevant to employers. Young people are looking to governments, investors and other international actors to increase opportunities by investing in youth entrepreneurship and social enterprise. Finally, young people require strong legal and regulatory frameworks to guarantee safe, equitable and stable work conditions.

Sustainability

Young people are keen supporters of environmental sustainability. Youth representatives advocated creating legal structures that penalize businesses for not taking efforts to protect biodiversity or use green technology. Furthermore, young people acknowledged the need to increase awareness of climate and environmental issues, both through formal education and broader public campaigns. Many young people make their living through agriculture, and support for farmers is important to promoting both youth interests and sustainability. Young people support mobilising resources to increase links between local farmers and the global economy, including through the modernization of farming practices, while endorsing fair trade and protecting farming as an important livelihood.

Sources: Restless Development and Youth Forum Declaration and DFID-CSO, 2013.

5 Conclusions and policy recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Investing development assistance resources in youth has clear economic, social and human rights benefits for this and future generations. The analysis above has focused on some of the key areas for investment in light of international development priorities, particularly those of the UK government. These areas comprise important and interrelated building blocks of more equitable development for young men and women, their communities, and their countries. Below are specific ways in which investment in youth can be put to work to achieve the greatest benefits.

5.2 Recommendations

- Young people play a central role in development. Young women and young men must continue to become more engaged in transforming the lives of their communities and their countries. Development assistance can foster enabling environments by continuing to fund CSO and NGO work in developing countries; working with young people so that their voices are heard; ensuring that young people's right to participation remains on the agenda; and providing technical assistance to governments to support spaces for youth participation.
- Social protection is a useful policy tool that has not yet been sufficiently used to benefit young people. Some examples include cash transfer programmes that enable young people to transition from primary to secondary school; work programmes that harness the comparative advantage of young people in certain sectors; and asset transfer programmes, particularly for rural youth, that include strong capacity-building components to provide pathways out of poverty. These must take into account gendered vulnerabilities to ensure young women are able to benefit.
- There is a need for disaggregated data by age, gender, disability, and other risk factors for exclusion. DFID should disaggregate data collected in all its programmes and projects — including those carried out with partners — according to these criteria. DFID and the FCO should advocate internationally for age-disaggregated data to become the norm in all development and humanitarian programming in accordance with UNGA Resolution 60/135.
- DFID should introduce a data marker to indicate all policies, projects and programmes that address or affect youth. Monitoring and evaluation is key to producing high quality investments that achieve value for money. Being able to track DFID's commitment to and impact on issues affecting young people is essential to the accurate assessment of the effectiveness of youth-focused development assistance.
- There is a need for more real-time data, including that captured through mobile devices; young people can be part of the data collection effort.
- The UK should advocate for youth-focused targets and indicators to be included in the post-2015 development agenda. Based on the evidence base of investments in young people, an international agenda focused on extending education and expanding employment opportunities should be the cornerstone of development planning.
- DFID should adapt its focus on women and girls to take specific account of youth-associated challenges and aid young women's SRH rights, access to education, access to employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- The Stabilisation Unit should adopt a youth lens for all development, diplomatic, military and investment interventions in unstable and conflict affected countries. Young people's multiple roles as victims, combatants, peace-builders and thought leaders must be addressed in cross-departmental policy to prevent the stigmatisation of youth, and particularly young men, as destabilising agents.

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Appendix 1: Interviewees

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2. Sam Bowman – Research Director, Adam Smith Institute.
3. Wendy Cunningham – Labour Economist, Latin America Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Group, World Bank.
4. Dr Jane Dyson – Researcher, Oxford University; Co-Author of “Telling Young Lives: Portraits of Global Youth” (2008) with Craig Jeffrey.
5. Jane Gough – Professor of Human Geography, Loughborough University; leading major research project on youth and employment: the role of entrepreneurship in African economies.
6. Nik Hartley – Chief Executive, Restless Development.
7. Lyndsay Hilker Maclean – Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Sussex; Consultant with Social Development Direct.
8. Ravi Karkara – Expert Advisor, Children & Youth, Partners and Youth Branch, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat.
9. Andreas Karsten – Researcher, Youthpolicy.org.
10. Simon Maxwell – Senior Research Associate, ODI.