



# EVIDENCE REVIEW OF CROSS-SECTORAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED ENVIRONMENTS

July 2017

This report is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Making Cents International through YouthPower: Evidence and Evaluation Task Order 1 (YouthPower Learning) AID Contract # AID-OAA-I-15-00034/AID-OAA-TO-15-00011. This report does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

# EVIDENCE REVIEW OF CROSS-SECTORAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED ENVIRONMENTS

July 2017

By

Lindsey Woolf, Making Cents International

Rachel Blum, Making Cents International

Cassandra Jessee, International Center for Research on Women and Making Cents International

Christy Olenik, Making Cents International

USAID's YouthPower Learning generates and disseminates knowledge about the implementation and impact of positive youth development (PYD) and cross-sectoral approaches in international youth development. We are leading research, evaluations, and events designed to build the evidence base and inform the global community about how to transition young people successfully into productive, healthy adults. PYD is defined by USAID as:

Positive Youth Development (PYD) engages youth along with their families, communities and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.

Visit us at [YouthPower.org](http://YouthPower.org) to learn more and follow us on Facebook and Twitter for updates.



For public inquiries and additional information please email [info@youthpower.org](mailto:info@youthpower.org) or mail to Making Cents International, attention: YouthPower Learning, 1350 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 410, Washington DC 20036 USA.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This brief is the result of a collaborative effort by the YouthPower Learning team. It was prepared by Making Cents International and the International Center for Research on Women, under the authorship of Ms. Lindsey Woolf, Ms. Rachel Blum, Ms. Cassandra Jessee and Dr. Christy Olenik.

The team would like to thank the staff of USAID for their support and insights. In particular, we would like to thank USAID/DRC, especially Zoey Breslar, Zeric Smith, and Natasha de Marcken, as well as Sara Calvert, Bill Hall, Mark Koenig, and Pascal Tshimanga. We also thank the following people who provided feedback to an expanded version of this brief: Ms. Rebecca Adams, Mr. Jacob Good, Mr. Michael McCabe, Ms. Yolande Miller-Grandvaux, Ms. Kristin O'Planick, Ms. Nancy Taggart, and Ms. Nina Weisenhorn of USAID and Ms. Maurizia Tovo of the World Bank.

## EVIDENCE REVIEW OF CROSS-SECTORAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED ENVIRONMENTS

The purpose of this evidence review is to provide a rapid synthesis of existing evidence related to cross-sectoral youth programming in conflict-affected areas, with a focus on youth development interventions most closely associated with stabilization activities like youth education, employment, and civic participation. The review was conducted as part of a larger activity in support of USAID/Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) programming and draws significantly on relevant research and documentation in the DRC. The evidence overwhelmingly shows that holistic programming is the mode of choice in conflict-affected environments, with most programs including five or more cross-sector components in the areas of education, workforce development, health, mental health, and civic engagement.<sup>1</sup> The literature also strongly suggests that youth needs in conflict environments are so great that holistic, comprehensive programs are the best and only way to deliver needed services.<sup>2</sup> This document attempts to unpack the emerging evidence in conflict-affected environments regarding what “mix” of youth development interventions works best to achieve desired outcomes.

Notably, this review considers concepts and principles related to Positive Youth Development (PYD) and outlines the emerging evidence related to PYD and cross-sectoral outcomes. Because this review emphasizes youth development and longer-term stabilization strategies, it does not cover evidence related to disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement (DDRRR), nor does it focus on youth-related responses within acute crises. Moreover, while this review looks at the integration of health interventions as part of a cross-sectoral youth approach, it takes only a cursory look at health-specific outcomes in conflict-affected environments.

This review scanned the available global literature on cross-sectoral topics to identify the most promising approaches to engage youth in areas affected by conflict. Findings were drawn from a recent publication by USAID, *A Systematic Review of Positive Youth Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*, which examined 108 studies reporting on 97 programs being implemented across 60 countries. It also draws from the *USAID State of the Field Report: Examining the Evidence in Youth Education in Crisis and Conflict*, which examined 33 studies published between 2001 and 2012.<sup>3</sup> Additional literature was reviewed to capture recent data and other cross-sectoral evidence from conflict-affected countries, highlighting cross-sectoral practices in peacebuilding, education, economic opportunity, and civic participation. (See endnotes for a complete list of references.)

The key findings of this review are:

1. Youth are less likely to display violent behavior when they have access to decision-making opportunities to exercise agency<sup>4,5</sup> Moreover, the soft skills most likely to increase youth success include self-control, positive self-concept, social skills, communication, and higher-order thinking skills.<sup>6</sup>
2. By providing positive pathways for youth development, cross-sectoral Positive Youth Development (PYD) approaches show promise for achieving outcomes across a variety of sectors, including violence reduction, conflict resolution, and civic engagement, as well as health, education, employment, and gender equality. PYD strategies offer a way for young people to develop the assets necessary to positively contribute to their communities, ultimately supporting long-term progress toward peacebuilding<sup>7</sup> and stability.

3. Single-sector youth interventions in conflict-affected areas should be approached with careful consideration. Education -- particularly non-formal education programs with flexible offerings and cross-sectoral components -- has an important role to play by promoting youth inclusion, socialization, social capital and social benefits. However, the link between education and direct contributions to peacebuilding has not been robustly proven. Peacebuilding education specifically has shown to have the unintended outcome of increasing conflict when youth are not allowed to exercise their learning with civic engagement opportunities. Similarly, while youth employment programs have been shown to have an impact on employment status and incomes, there is limited evidence that lack of employment leads directly to involvement in violence; in fact, job training and entrepreneurship programs have shown to exacerbate tensions when not coupled with tangible employment opportunities. Finally, civically engaged youth have been found to be more supportive of armed opposition groups, not less, when civic engagement programs are not paired with meaningful governance reforms.

## GLOBAL EVIDENCE REVIEW OF CROSS-SECTORAL PROGRAMMING

### EDUCATION AND PEACEBUILDING

The global evidence suggests that *education has an important role to play in social<sup>B</sup> and cross-sectoral outcomes.*<sup>9</sup> Emerging evidence in high-income countries is pointing to the links between “school-based universal social-emotional learning programs” and improved academic performance, social-emotional well-being, and reduced aggression.<sup>10</sup> However, the link between education and direct contributions to peacebuilding has not been robustly proven, as not enough research has been conducted to confirm the link between short-term education outcomes and longer-term impact in terms of stability or reduced violence at the country level.<sup>11</sup> Evaluations are often focused on program goals rather than long-term peacebuilding effects.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, imprecise concepts and definitions related to peacebuilding -- and the many political, social, and economic variables that contribute to peacebuilding -- make it challenging to demonstrate the relationship between education, conflict, and peacebuilding.

In spite of its positive effects, if not delivered responsibly or if insufficiently monitored, education can be a spark for further exclusion or oppression.<sup>13</sup> Educational environments have the potential to perpetuate violence and replicate social injustices through inequitable access to education (and resultant economic opportunities), which can reinforce ethnic, religious, or political conflicts by separating children and communities.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, education programming should be implemented with sensitivity to local conflict dynamics and a view toward how education programming can promote inclusion and contribute to PYD outcomes, rather than furthering exclusion.

### MARGINALIZATION AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Increasing access to flexible, cross-sectoral, non-formal education is believed to lead to a number of positive outcomes beyond the education sector. Available evidence supports the theory that marginalized youth in conflict-affected areas suffer due to displacement and subsequent exclusion from formal education, which they view as key to economic success and livelihoods. A recent USAID Education in Crisis Conflict Network (ECCN) report on alternative education in the DRC found that despite persistent barriers to formal schooling, youth highly value education, not only for the literacy and numeracy skills attained, but also for key social benefits, including self-respect, expression, social worth, and independence.<sup>15</sup> Male and female youth in the DRC believe that schooling is vital to securing employment and future livelihoods for themselves and their families, and they are deeply committed to

this view despite pervasive unemployment throughout the DRC.<sup>16</sup> The ECCN report found that the most common reasons for not participating in alternative education programs had to do with relevance,<sup>17</sup> costs, stigma, distance, or conflict with work or other responsibilities.<sup>18</sup>

Globally, the evidence suggests that *there are 'girl-specific' factors that can make a difference in increasing girls' attendance at school*, including “(a) the posting and retention of female teachers; (b) gender-sensitive teaching; (c) accessibility of counselors; (d) a safe school environment without the threat of violence.”<sup>19</sup> Non-formal education programs can address social and economic exclusion as well as barriers to accessing formal education by providing opportunities to youth who have had their schooling interrupted.<sup>20</sup> Non-traditional education can also provide a safe enabling environment that fosters healthy relationships, a sense of belonging, positive norms and expectations, and a safe space for youth to learn.<sup>21</sup>

## ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION AND CROSS-SECTORAL PROGRAMS

Non-formal or alternative education programs often involve short-term technical and vocational education training programs that may also include some basic education components, conflict mediation instruction, the teaching of soft or life skills, and health education.<sup>22</sup> The literature strongly suggests that flexible, accelerated education on a variety of topics can help youth learn the necessary skills to contribute to their own development.<sup>23</sup> *Non-formal education interventions with integrated cross-sectoral components show promise for youth in conflict-affected situations*, as they can address the variable factors excluding youth from formal education and employment opportunities by building key skills and competencies (such as positive self-concept, self-control, higher-order thinking, social skills, and empathy<sup>24</sup>) in youth that then improve their likelihood for economic success.

## ACCELERATED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Accelerated education programs (AEPs) are flexible, age-appropriate programs that promote access to education in an accelerated timeframe for out-of-school youth excluded or interrupted from formal education due to crisis and conflict.<sup>25</sup> The evidence suggests that AEPs may be outperforming formal schools, though more research is needed, as long-term outcomes such as employment and wages have not been tracked.<sup>26</sup> Accelerated catch-up programs have been found to work well with ex-combatants. Separately, remedial programs that help children catch up to the formal system rather than covering a whole education program appear to be appropriate in conflict-affected environments, as they can be simpler than accelerated education programs.<sup>27</sup> Further, *a positive, nurturing educational environment that offers a safe space has been shown to mitigate violence and help in youth development.*<sup>28</sup> AEPs adapted to target participant needs that integrate cross-sectoral components show promise for offering viable educational and skills development opportunities for marginalized and excluded youth in conflict-affected communities.

## KEY SOFT SKILLS FOR CROSS-SECTORAL YOUTH OUTCOMES

Recent literature suggests that soft skills rival cognitive skills in their ability to predict a variety of positive outcomes, and that soft skills are more malleable than cognitive skills among adolescents and young adults.<sup>29</sup> *The soft skills most likely to increase youth success include self-control, positive self-concept, social skills, communication, and higher-order thinking skills.* Positive self-concept, self-control, and higher-order thinking skills are all related to positive outcomes in workforce success and violence prevention, as well as sexual and reproductive health.<sup>30</sup> Overall, soft skills programs have been found to be effective at deterring crime, violence and other anti-social behaviors, and those targeted at-risk or high-risk youth commonly use a cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) approach to help them increase self-control, improve interpersonal relationships, and avoid resorting to violence.<sup>31</sup>

Additional evidence raises questions related to the benefits of and approaches to incorporating socio-emotional skills into primary school curricula in conflict-affected countries. An evaluation of the USAID-funded Opportunities for Equitable Access to Quality Basic Education (OPEQ) program looked at the impact of IRC's "Learning in a Health Classroom" (LHC) intervention among primary school students in eastern DRC, which integrated social-emotional learning into high-quality reading and math instruction, combined with in-service teacher training and coaching. Results suggested that in the first year, the LHC approach in eastern DRC improved children's reading and select math skills and increased perceptions of their schools as caring and supportive. Interventions did not, however, improve student mental health or lead to a decrease in reports of peer victimization. Also noteworthy is that once the program was expanded in the second year of implementation, students in sample schools did not see greater positive results as compared to those in control schools. To date this has been "the only evaluation of a school-based program in a conflict-affected country to consider the program impact on both academic skills and social-emotional well-being."<sup>32</sup> These findings highlight the need to better understand what kind of school-based interventions can best address the mental health problems among children and youth, as well as reducing peer victimization in conflict-affected contexts.

### HOLISTIC PROGRAMMING AND HEALTH OUTCOMES

Using a holistic PYD approach can help increase youth self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy, which are linked to multiple outcomes of interest, including improved knowledge and behaviors related to sexual and reproductive health and HIV.<sup>33</sup> For example, an evaluation of the Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) program, which targeted 14- to 20-year-old girls in Uganda and focused on life skills, vocational training, and recreational activities, found that the program had significantly increased self-employment, pregnancy-related knowledge, HIV knowledge, and condom usage.<sup>34</sup> Another example from the Bangladeshi Association for Life Skills, Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents (BALIKA) project suggests outcomes can include a significant reduction in the likelihood of child marriage as well as increased positive health, educational, economic, and social outcomes for girls. In BALIKA, in-school participants received tutoring in mathematics and English, whereas out-of-school participants received computer or financial training. All participants received training on gender rights and negotiation, critical thinking, decision-making, and livelihoods skills, and met weekly with mentors and peers in safe, girl-only locations.

Cross-sectoral programs that include objectives related to economic development and education or democracy and governance, along with interventions aimed to improve health outcomes, can achieve multi-sectoral outcomes of interest.<sup>35</sup> For example, a multi-faceted HIV prevention program, Shaping the Health of Adolescents in Zimbabwe (SHAZ!), included a comprehensive assessment of sexual behaviors and biological measures, while also addressing food security. The randomized control trial of SHAZ! showed long-term benefits related to food security, an increase the number of participants receiving their own income, and a reduction in the risk of engaging in sex in exchange for food, money, or other resources.<sup>36</sup>

Another example of a successful cross-sectoral program is Street Smart, a Ugandan-based HIV intervention youth program. An evaluation found that less than half the participants had ever been employed at recruitment, while 86% were employed within two years of post-recruitment. They also found participating youth showed decreases in the number of sexual partners, mental health symptoms, delinquent acts, and drug use, and their condom use increased. The evaluation further suggested that aiding youth in finding employment, in conjunction with HIV prevention, provided sustained support to young people to prevent HIV infection.<sup>37</sup>

## EMPLOYMENT AND CONFLICT

Overall, the literature suggests that linkages between employment and conflict are complex and variable, and an understanding of the theory of change and implied assumptions about drivers of conflict is required when implementing employability programs with desired outcomes related to conflict. For example, *there is limited evidence that lack of employment leads directly to involvement in violence*. A recent Mercy Corps study on programming in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Somalia found no direct relationship between joblessness and a young person's willingness to engage in, or support, political violence. The report found the *main drivers of youth political violence to be rooted in experiences of injustice: marginalization, disenfranchisement, discrimination, exclusive governance structures, and abuse by government security forces*.<sup>38</sup> Further, vocational training projects not linked to meaningful employment opportunities risk aggravating youth frustrations.<sup>39</sup>

The International Labour Organization (ILO), UN, and World Bank recently reviewed their employment programs in conflict-affected settings and found *three implicitly assumed theories of change that link employment programming and peacebuilding based on the underlying assumptions of what drives conflict and unemployment: contact, grievance, and opportunity*. *Contact* theories suggest that if conflict is driven by negative perceptions among groups, employment programs may reduce conflict by bringing groups together and providing opportunities to break down stereotypes and foster mutual understanding, ultimately creating social cohesion.<sup>40</sup> *Grievance* theories imply that if the conflict is driven by real or perceived injustices, employment programs may reduce conflict risk by addressing those injustices; and *opportunity* theories propose that if conflict is driven by adverse economic circumstances, providing access to livelihoods may reduce incentives to engage in violence as a means of improving economic circumstances.<sup>41</sup>

## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INTERVENTIONS

Youth employment interventions generally include training and skills development, entrepreneurship promotion, employment services (a.k.a. "job intermediation") and subsidized employment. The Youth Opportunities Program in Uganda (Figure 1) fits this description. A recent ILO/World Bank systematic review of 113 rigorous evaluations found that "*Youth employment interventions lead to positive outcomes, increasing employment and earnings of participating youth,*" with impact tending to be higher in low- and middle-income countries where relatively larger swathes of disadvantaged youth benefit more from skills training and entrepreneurship.<sup>42</sup> A different analysis, however, raises concern that most technical and vocational training programs usually involve a relatively high cost per participant, and *emerging evidence suggests that cash transfers are more cost-effective at achieving income and employment outcomes*.<sup>43</sup>

**Figure 1: Youth Opportunities Program, Uganda<sup>44</sup>**

*Youth Opportunities Program*, a program in northern Uganda, invited male and female youth aged 18 to 35 to submit group proposals to receive vocational training and start individual enterprises, with groups receiving grants of nearly \$400 per person. Four years later, a randomized evaluation in conflict-affected communities showed that work hours increased by 20% and earnings by 40% among grant recipients. Moreover, it was shown that on average, participants invested 15% of the \$400 grant funding in skills development. Despite the growing amount of evidence, there are almost no studies comparing capital injections provided with or without training; however, programs in which both were provided have typically found that training and capital injections can be complements.

While the debate continues, there is widespread agreement that successful program approaches vary

widely according to context (see Figure 2 for one example). Compared to the actual interventions, the design of the project -- namely participant profiling, monitoring, and incentives for participants and for service providers -- has greater effect on project success.<sup>45</sup> One common thread is that programs show the greatest promise when they link training closely with local market opportunities.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, benefits are best seen over the long run -- at least a year following the initial intervention.<sup>47</sup>

### Figure 2: Health and Women's Economic Empowerment: Multiplier Effects of Cross-Sectoral Approaches<sup>48</sup>

The RCT-based study of the Stepping Stones program in South Africa (but implemented in more than 100 countries), which uses a life-skills training package, suggests that a holistic PYD approach can successfully increase employment and reduce violence among men and women. Rachel Jewkes and colleagues investigated an intervention package that aimed to influence gender norms and HIV prevention among out-of-school youth, mostly aged 18-30. They wanted to determine whether integrating a broad economic empowerment intervention into the package could reduce the incidence of gender-based violence among young men and women. The intervention helped participants find work or set up a business; it did not give individuals cash or make loans. Findings included the following:

- Young men's mean earnings increased by 247% and women's earnings increased by 278%.
- There was a significant reduction in women's experience of the combined measure of physical or sexual interpersonal violence
- Men and women scored significantly better on tests of gender attitudes, and men reported significantly reducing controlling practices in their relationships.
- The prevalence of moderate or severe depression symptomatology and suicidal thoughts among men decreased significantly.

#### AGENCY AND EMPOWERMENT

The evidence supports the idea that providing additional engagement options for youth and vulnerable groups increases their ability to exercise agency, which is defined as "youth perceiving and having the ability to employ their assets and aspirations to make or influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, as well as to act upon those decisions in order to achieve desired outcomes."<sup>49</sup> *Research suggests that what separates whether youth in high-risk circumstances thrive or not is based upon a combination of connections to positive influences, whether peer, adult, or community-based. This category includes access to positive influences, options for mentorship and role modeling, and opportunities to learn from and model good behavior. Youth are less likely to display violent behavior when they have access to decision-making opportunities and to exercise agency.*<sup>50</sup>

Evidence also shows ex-child soldiers provided with rehabilitative and psychosocial support and embraced by their communities can become productive adults through the provision of positive pathways for youth to feel empowered and foster their agency.<sup>51</sup> *The evidence suggests that providing youth, particularly vulnerable and marginalized youth, with opportunities to develop skills and exercise their agency can lead to improved positive outcomes in violence reduction and overall productivity.*

#### CIVIC EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Civic education is also a key component of many youth programs. The evidence suggests that *civic engagement components can have positive effects on stability, but those activities should be designed with careful consideration for the local environment conflict and governance dynamics.* It is vital to understand how those dynamics may be affected by the infusion of civic engagement programming. For instance, a number of

studies have measured the impact of multi-component, cross-sectoral programs on reduced violence and increased tolerance. These studies found that youth decreased their participation in violent and illicit activities as a result of programming, attributing behavior changes to the inclusion of civic engagement, civic education, conflict mediation, and peacebuilding interventions.<sup>52</sup> However the Mercy Corps report on programming in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Somalia found that civically engaged youth are actually more supportive of armed opposition groups, not less, as civic engagement programs not paired with meaningful governance reforms “may simply stoke youth frustrations with exclusive, elder-dominated formal institutions.”<sup>53</sup>

## PEACEBUILDING EDUCATION

Peace and conflict resolution programming can be implemented in a variety of ways, yet usually involves teaching and learning about non-violent methods for resolving conflict and encouraging peace.<sup>54</sup> *It is suggested that with increased exposure to peacebuilding through positive role models, peaceful enabling environments, and peace-promoting skills, youth will be more likely to learn peaceful behavior and conflict resolution strategies.*<sup>55</sup> Best practices in peacebuilding education align with the concept of building knowledge, skills, and attitudes for peace and conflict resolution, and are tailored to meet the age and developmental characteristics of students.<sup>56</sup> Further, best practices suggest acknowledging and understanding youth’s roles as actors in conflict settings and steering young people towards socially constructive activities, as these counteract social marginalization and replicate the “benefits” that young people report from participation in armed groups. Those perceived benefits include a sense of belonging, solidarity, opportunity to lead, income generation, respect, etc.<sup>57</sup> Other best practices include investing in teacher preparation and integrating various peacebuilding initiatives such as psycho-social healing for internally displaced persons and peace and tolerance education for the greater population.<sup>58</sup> In addition, targeting various ages based on adolescent development science, as well as bridging formal and non-formal education settings to provide a continuum of learning opportunities that promote peaceful behaviors, are also cited as best practices in the literature.<sup>59</sup>

## WHY POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT?

Considering the complex set of internal and external factors in eastern DRC, it would be natural to view youth in the DRC as victims of and participants in conflict; however, youth can alternatively be perceived as agents of positive change. Due to the ongoing development of the adolescent brain, up until their mid- to late twenties, young people experience “rapid changes across multiple developmental domains: physical, cognitive, social, psychological, and spiritual. (Lippman et al., 2008)”<sup>60</sup> This suggests that youth are susceptible to risks and opportunities. Even though marginalized youth may be “particularly vulnerable to psychological and emotional problems” as a result of distress,<sup>61</sup> the evidence suggests that the adolescent brain is malleable, and that positive experiences across the developmental domains can in fact shape a young person into a healthy, productive, and engaged adult.<sup>62</sup>

The USAID YouthPower Learning project has developed the following definition of PYD for USAID:

**Positive Youth Development (PYD)** engages youth along with their families, communities, and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets, and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.

A PYD approach “transitions away from responding with a problem focus to youth risks and toward proactively building skills, fostering healthy relationships, and making youth active partners in development efforts.”<sup>63</sup> Specifically, PYD “suggests that if young people have the knowledge, skills, and support they need, they will thrive as adults, enjoy good health, succeed economically, and make meaningful contributions to their communities.” An overarching PYD framework suggests four domains to achieving this success: assets, agency, contribution, and enabling environment (Figure 3)<sup>64</sup>.

PYD Framework:

- **Assets:** Youth have the necessary resources, skills, and competencies to achieve desired outcomes.
- **Agency:** Youth perceive and can employ their assets and aspirations to make or influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, as well as to act upon those decisions to achieve desired outcomes, without fear of violence or retribution.
- **Contribution:** Youth are engaged as a source of change for their own and for their communities’ positive development.
- **Enabling Environment:** Youth are surrounded by an environment that maximizes their assets, agency, access to services, and opportunities, as well as their ability to avoid risks, stay safe and secure, and be protected. An enabling environment encourages and recognizes youth while promoting their social and emotional competence to thrive.

Figure 3: PYD Framework



A recent USAID report, *A Systematic Review of Positive Youth Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*, found that, although the number of evaluations is limited, PYD programs in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) have resulted in positive outcomes across sectors, including improved knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to positive shifts in gender norms; on employment, skills development, and financial behaviors; and on sexual and reproductive health (SRH).<sup>65</sup> *Programs with positive results for these sector-specific outcomes had several common traits: a systemic approach to youth programming that engages numerous stakeholders across multiple settings, including schools, households and community centers; the teaching of transferable skills and competencies, such as socio-emotional and problem-solving skills and the fostering of positive behaviors such as self-awareness, self-determination, and leadership; and the inclusion of innovative, youth-centered, and youth-led activities.*<sup>66</sup> The research also suggests that different approaches should be gender and age appropriate, with analysis and monitoring data disaggregated by sex and by five-year age bands (10-14; 15-19; 20- 24; 25-29).

A PYD approach is especially relevant in the complex context of the eastern DRC because by “intentionally targeting outcomes across several sectors, PYD programs hold the promise of increasing the return on prevention investments.” This implies the ability to target factors that predict many outcomes rather than those that predict only one or two.<sup>67</sup> Given its holistic nature, PYD programming leads not only to outcomes of interest, but also to other positive outcomes that position youth to become thriving adults. A PYD approach “leads to a wide range of positive adult outcomes in education, employment, social relationships, and reductions in substance use and other behavioral health

problems.”<sup>68</sup>

PYD strategies are employed in pursuit of a wide range of outcomes, all of which are pertinent to the conflict affected environments: health, education, employment, conflict resolution, violence prevention, gender equality, and civic engagement.<sup>69</sup> PYD programs in schools and job training efforts are often designed to make the settings more supportive, safe, and productive. Having a psychologically and physically safe space is linked with violence reduction and capacity-building for civic engagement.<sup>70</sup> PYD programming designed to improve employability through job training and internships has shown significant improvements in labor market outcomes as well as improved conflict resolution behaviors.<sup>71</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Olenik, C. and Takyi-Laryea, A. (2013). *USAID State of the Field Report: Examining the Evidence in Youth Education in Crisis and Conflict*. Washington, DC: USAID Youth Research, Evaluation, and Learning Project, JBS International, Inc. [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USAID%20state%20of%20the%20field%20youth%20education%20in%20conflict%20final%20\\_11.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USAID%20state%20of%20the%20field%20youth%20education%20in%20conflict%20final%20_11.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The term “agency” is defined as a state in which “youth perceive and can employ their assets and aspirations to make or influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, as well as to act upon those decisions to achieve desired outcomes, without fear of violence or retribution.” Adapted from: Hinson, L., Kapungu, C., Jessee, C., Skinner, M., Bardini, M. and Evans-Whipp, T. (2016). *Measuring Positive Youth Development Toolkit: A Guide for Implementers of Youth Programs*. Washington, DC: YouthPower Learning, Making Cents International. <http://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development-toolkit>.

<sup>5</sup> Alvarado, G., Skinner, M., Plaut, D., Moss, C., Kapungu, C., and Reavley, N. (2017). *A Systematic Review of Positive Youth Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*. Washington, DC: YouthPower Learning, Making Cents International. <http://www.youthpower.org/systematic-review-pyd-lmics>

<sup>6</sup> Gates, S., Lippman, L., Shadowen, N., Burke, H., Diener, O., and Malkin, M. (2016). *Key Soft Skills for Cross-Sectoral Youth Outcomes*. Washington, DC: USAID’s YouthPower: Implementation, YouthPower Action.

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this section, we use the definition of peacebuilding from the Global Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding’s *Evaluation of Children and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding* (2015) as work to prevent, stop, or heal the occurrence of any form of violence (direct, cultural, and structural) including “reconciliation, non-violence, or conflict-transformation efforts preventing or limiting violence.”

<sup>8</sup> Smith, A., McCandless, E., Paulson, J. and Wheaton, W. (2011). *The Role of Education in Peacebuilding: Literature Review*. New York, NY: UNICEF.

<sup>9</sup> Alvarado, G., Skinner, M., Plaut, D., Moss, C., Kapungu, C., and Reavley, N. (2017).

<sup>10</sup> Durlak, J., Weissberg, R., Dymnicki, A., Taylor, R., & Schellinger, K., (2011). The impact of enhancing social and emotional learning; a meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82, 405-432. Cited in: USAID. *Opportunities for Equitable Access to Quality Basic Education (OPEQ)*. Final Report on the Impact of the OPEQ Intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo. New York University and the International Rescue Committee. (2015). [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pa00mgj3.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00mgj3.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Olenik, C. and Takyi-Laryea, A. (2013).

<sup>12</sup> Smith, A., McCandless, E., Paulson, J. and Wheaton, W. (2011).

<sup>13</sup> Olenik, C. and Takyi-Laryea, A. (2013).

<sup>14</sup> Reilly, E. (2012). *Peacebuilding Knowledge Attitudes and Skills: Desk Review and Recommendations*. Retrieved from UNICEF: <http://unicef.sectae.com/resources/peacebuilding-knowledge-attitudes-and-skills-desk-review-and-recommendations/>.

<sup>15</sup> USAID Education in Crisis & Conflict Network (ECCN). (2016). *Alternative Education in the DRC: Final Research Report*. Retrieved from USAID ECCN: [http://eccnetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/DRC.Final\\_.pdf](http://eccnetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/DRC.Final_.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Relevance is defined as “the perception that participation was not worth the time and effort, or that part-time employment was more important, or that programming was uninteresting or not relevant to their lives.”

<sup>18</sup> USAID Education in Crisis & Conflict Network (ECCN). (2016).

<sup>19</sup> DFID. (2015). *DRC Education Business Case: Improving access, quality and governance in education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Retrieved from: [http://iati.dfid.gov.uk/iati\\_documents/4651987.odt](http://iati.dfid.gov.uk/iati_documents/4651987.odt).

<sup>20</sup> Zimmerman, L. (2014). *Ensuring Protection and Education in Emergencies: Lessons Learned from Youth & Adolescent Programming*. Retrieved from Global Education Cluster: <https://educationcluster.net/?get=002009%7C2014/11/Lessons-learned-from-YA-programming-in-emergencies.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> See Hinson, L., Kapungu, C., Jessee, C., Skinner, M., Bardini, M. & Evans-Whipp, T. (2016). *Measuring Positive Youth Development Toolkit: A Guide for Implementers of Youth Programs*. Washington, DC: YouthPower Learning, Making Cents International. <http://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development-toolkit>

<sup>22</sup> Fawcett, C. and Olenik, C. (2013). *State of the Field Report: Examining the Evidence in Youth Workforce Development*. Washington, DC: USAID Youth Research, Evaluation, and Learning Project, JBS International, Inc.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Gates, S., Lippman, L., Shadowen, N., Burke, H., Diener, O., and Malkin, M. (2016).

- <sup>25</sup> Baxter, P., Dayaratna, V., Menendez, A., and North, L. (2016). *Accelerated Education Programs in Crisis and Conflict*. Chicago, IL: NORC at the University of Chicago.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Smith, A, McCandless, E., Paulson, J. and Wheaton, W. (2011).
- <sup>28</sup> Fawcett, C. and Olenik, C. (2013).
- <sup>29</sup> Gates, S., Lippman, L., Shadowen, N., Burke, H., Diener, O., and Malkin, M. (2016).
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Blattman, C. and Ralston, L. (2015). *Generating Employment in Poor and Fragile States: Evidence from Labor market and Entrepreneurship Programs*. Retrieved from SSRN: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2622220](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2622220).
- <sup>32</sup> Opportunities for Equitable Access to Quality Basic Education (OPEQ). Final Report on the Impact of the OPEQ Intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo. New York University and the International Rescue Committee. (2015). [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pa00mgj3.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00mgj3.pdf).
- <sup>33</sup> Alvarado, G., Skinner, M., Plaut, D., Moss, C., Kapungu, C., and Reavley, N. (2017)
- <sup>34</sup> Bandiera, O., Buehren, N., Burgess, R., Goldstein, M., Gulesci, S., Rasul, I., & Sulaiman, M. (2015). *Women's empowerment in action: Evidence from a randomized control trial in Africa*. Retrieved from <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctpimr/research/ELA.pdf>.
- <sup>35</sup> Alvarado, G., Skinner, M., Plaut, D., Moss, C., Kapungu, C., and Reavley, N. (2017).
- <sup>36</sup> Dunbar, M. S., Kang Dufour, M. S., Lambdin, B., Mudekunye-Mahaka, I., Nhamo, D., & Padian, N. S. (2014). *The SHAZ! project: Results from a pilot randomized trial of a structural intervention to prevent HIV among adolescent women in Zimbabwe*. PLoS One, 9(11), e113621. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0113621
- <sup>37</sup> Rotheram-Borus, M. J., Lightfoot, M., Kasirye, R., & Desmond, K. (2012). *Vocational training with HIV prevention for Ugandan youth*. *AIDS and Behavior*, 16(5), 1133-1137. doi:10.1007/s10461-011-0007-y
- <sup>38</sup> Mercy Corps. (2015). *Youth & Consequences: Unemployment, Injustice and Violence*. Portland, OR: Mercy Corps.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank (WB). (2016). *Employment Programmes for Peace: A Joint Statement on an Analytical Framework, Emerging Principles for Action and Next Steps*. Retrieved from ILO: [http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/statements-and-speeches/WCMS\\_535665/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/statements-and-speeches/WCMS_535665/lang--en/index.htm).
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> Kluge J, Puerto S, Robalino D, Romero J M, Rother F, Stöterau J, Weidenkaff F, Witte M. (2016). Interventions to improve the labour market outcomes of youth: a systematic review of training, entrepreneurship promotion, employment services, and subsidized employment interventions. ([http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_508938.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_508938.pdf))
- <sup>43</sup> Blattman, C. and Ralston, L. (2015).
- <sup>44</sup> Blattman, C., Fiala, N., and Martinez, S. (2014). *Generating Skilled Self-Employment in Developing Countries: Experimental Evidence from Uganda*. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(2), pp. 697–752
- <sup>45</sup> Kluge, J., Puerto, S, Robalino, D., Romero J. M., Rother F., Stöterau, J., Weidenkaff, F., and Witte, M. (2016).
- <sup>46</sup> YouthPower Learning. (2016). *Workforce Development and Youth Employment in Nigeria: Desk Review*. Washington, DC: YouthPower Learning, Making Cents International.
- <sup>47</sup> Kluge, J., Puerto, S, Robalino, D., Romero J. M., Rother F., Stöterau, J., Weidenkaff, F., and Witte, M. (2016).
- <sup>48</sup> Jewkes, R., Nduna, M., Levin, J., Jama, N., Dunkle, K., Puren, A., & Duvvury, N. (2008). *Impact of stepping stones on incidence of HIV and HSV-2 and sexual behaviour in rural South Africa: Cluster randomised controlled trial*. *BMJ*, 337, a506.
- <sup>49</sup> Hinson, L., Kapungu, C., Jessee, C., Skinner, M., Bardini, M. & Evans-Whipp, T. (2016).
- <sup>50</sup> Hilker, M. L. and Fraser, E. (2009). *Youth exclusion, violence, conflict and fragile states*. London, UK: Social Development Direct.
- <sup>51</sup> Fawcett, C. and Olenik, C. (2013).
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>53</sup> Mercy Corps. (2015). *Youth & Consequences: Unemployment, Injustice and Violence*. Portland, OR: Mercy Corps.
- <sup>54</sup> Reilly, E. (2012). *Peacebuilding Knowledge Attitudes and Skills: Desk Review and Recommendations*. Retrieved from UNICEF: <http://unicef.sectae.com/resources/peacebuilding-knowledge-attitudes-and-skills-desk-review-and-recommendations/>.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid.

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Guerra, N. and Olenik, C. (2013). *State of the Field Report: Holistic, Cross-Sectoral Youth Development*. Washington, DC: USAID Youth Research, Evaluation, and Learning Project, JBS International, Inc.

<sup>61</sup> Citing Sebastian, Viding, Williams, & Blakemore, 2010, in Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Guerra, N. and Olenik, C. (2013).

<sup>63</sup> Alvarado, G., Skinner, M., Plaut, D., Moss, C., Kapungu, C., and Reavley, N. (2017).

<sup>64</sup> Hinson, L., Kapungu, C., Jessee, C., Skinner, M., Bardini, M. & Evans-Whipp, T. (2016).

<sup>65</sup> Alvarado, G., Skinner, M., Plaut, D., Moss, C., Kapungu, C., and Reavley, N. (2017).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.