Committee/Council: Special Conference

Issue: Strengthening youth engagement in resilience building

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Introduction

It is undeniable that in our times young people are a true force, a force that can bring about change, improvement and enhancement of individual communities and even of the international community. Today young people face multiple challenges in different sectors all at once. They are confronted with umpteenth problems ranging from high unemployment rates to oppression and armed conflicts. They are even faced with climate change and the consequences of it on all levels. Their ability to overcome these issues is shaped by their commitment and skills, but most importantly by society's commitment to them, meaning the abiding faith and effort society will put on these young individuals.

Definition of Key-Terms

Youth

According to the Oxford Dictionary, we use the term youth to describe the period between childhood and adulthood. However, UNESCO has given a more precise definition of it. Namely, youth is the period of transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood and awareness of the interdependence of community as its permanent members. For international activities, the United Nations and all its subsequent bodies use the international definition for statistical reasons that states that persons between the age of 15 until the age of 24 may be referred to as a youth.

Empowerment

The word empowerment stems from the word power which means strength. Therefore, empowerment defines the process of getting stronger, more powerful and obtaining confidence. With regard to youth empowerment, this concept is based on the idea of a society that improves or gives useful skills to young people, offers opportunities, and hands over authority to participate. That will eventually lead to more confidence, more encouragement and enhanced abilities as far as social issues and their involvement are concerned.

Engagement

The term 'engagement' refers to a person's involvement in an issue or a situation.

Resilience

According to the United Nations Developing Programme, 'Resilience' refers to the capacity of men, women, communities, institutions, and countries to anticipate, prevent, recover from, and transform in the aftermath of shocks, stresses, and change. Recovery from conflict-induced crises, stronger ability to prepare for and deal with the consequences of natural disasters, and capacity to adapt to change are major issues when it comes to resilience building.

Post- conflict

We use the term 'post-conflict' to refer to a situation following or occurring after a military conflict

Marginalized youth

Marginalization describes the process of the alienation of a person from a group, which is an extremely frequent social phenomenon whereby people or a group are treated as insignificant and peripheral. Marginalized youth refers to young people between the ages 15 to 19 that are alienated mostly due to socioeconomic reasons.

Peacebuilding

This term was first used in the 1970's and emerged in order to express the need for structures that would promote sustainable peace by tackling causes of conflict and reinforcing peace management. Now, it covers a wide range of definitions from "the disarming of warring factions to the rebuilding of political, economic, judicial and civil society institutions" according to the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office.

Background Information

Resilience building and its sectors

Resilience building is practically sustainable human development in a society. It is a challenging task to overcome issues created in periods of crisis that actually involves peace-building. Engaging young people in this specific task is rational considering the fact that they comprise the future of the world.

There are two cases in which young people can engage in resilience building, namely in post-conflict and post-disaster (natural disaster). The main objectives of this engagement or involvement are the quick return of each specific regions to post-conflict conditions and their early recovery from the disaster that struck.

Despite the fact that the field of research is quite limited concerning young peoples' engagement in post conflict regions, there is evidence that young people can be extremely important when it comes to peacebuilding with a wide range of roles. Peacebuilding is directly linked to resilience building since the latter one is regarded as a means of achieving peace and long-term stability. It is essential to remember that a resilient and therefore, peaceful society is more likely to recover early from a crisis situation. People belonging to the age group that is called youth have the potential of being extremely helpful in cases like this. They can assume the role of the agents of change in their own communities by being negotiators, political activists, actors of justice and security, peacemakers, etc. Young people should be regarded as the key element of resilient communities and should also be supported during their engagement in resilience building, so as to promote stability in each specific region.

One may wonder why young people are so important when it comes to this matter. Well, this specific age group tends to be more risk-taking than others and is also considered to be extremely future- oriented. The youth of each country and generally of the world is an essential actor in resilience building and thus, should be more encouraged and empowered in taking part in the recovery of their community after violent conflict or natural disasters.

Despite their significance, young people face many challenges in periods of or even after a crisis tends to be more vulnerable in all cases whether they have been indirect or direct victims, bystanders or even perpetrators of violence. The reasons behind their vulnerability might vary. Setting physical and mental trauma aside, especially in cases where they were involved as combatants, young people are very likely to have missed educational years, thus being considered as illiterate in the labor market facing major unemployment and as a consequence financial problems, and in addition they may have lost resources or benefits they had beforehand. This may result in a troubled transition from childhood to adulthood, thus rendering empowerment of this group necessary. The problem young people face after violent conflict and disastrous situations should be tackled and they should correctly in a resilient society, so as for them to be considered as suitable and 'fit' to acquire the role of the agent of change and resilience in their own and the international community.

Resilience does not only apply to a conflict. A community should be resilient to an environmental crisis or natural disasters as well. Witnessing for example climate change and realizing that few people are concerned by the effects of it, young men

and women have to play a vital role to address these concerns in order to encourage vulnerable communities to be more resilient and robust.

One should invest in resilience because it strengthens infrastructure and national and individual capabilities and renders them more sustainable. Moreover, it is of major assistance when it comes to hosting communities and their abilities to recover from the potential crisis, but most importantly investing in resilience building in fragile communities will probably reduce the costs of an international coordinated response in the long term.

RESILIENCE-BASED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES WILL:
- ENHANCE NATIONAL CONFLICT PREVENTION CAPACITIES AND STRUCTURES
- PROMOTE LOCAL GOVERNANCE MODELS THAT ENSURE THE INCLUSION OF DIVERSITY WITHIN COMMUNITIES
- STRENGTHEN LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND LIMIT INSTANCES OF VIOLENCE BASED ON PERCEIVED INEQUALITIES
- EQUIP YOUNG BOYS AND GIRLS WITH THE SKILLS TO LIVE IN A MULTICULTURAL AND DIVERSE SOCIETY

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The United Nations Development Programme has taken quite an interest in this matter. It has created various reports and projects regarding this topic. For example, the Livelihoods recovery for Peace Project that promotes social peace, cohesion, and empowerment of youth, for instance, by creating several groups and projects in which marginalized or affected young people may participate so as to be more easily integrated into society. Another Programme that was created by the UNDP is the UN Interagency Rehabilitation Programme that aims at appropriate rehabilitation of persons returning from military to civilian life by offering access to education and employment, etc.

UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund has attempted to resolve an aspect of the issue by creating the Project 'Return and Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups'.

Nepal

The Nepali Government has released a National Youth Policy,whose aim it is to inform the youth about their rights and their approach to certain political and social issues, such as the way they should deal with conflict-affected and post-conflict communities to improve the situation at hand. Moreover, Nepal has been supported by the United Nations with the UNMIN (United Nations Mission in Nepal) and by many other organizations that still assists the state in recovering from the civil conflict that plagued the country. According to SFCG (Search for Common Ground), a non-governmental organization in this field, the youth has an active role in resilience building of the community in this country. Nepal has also been struggling with the consequences of the earthquakes that plagues the region in 2015. Below you will find a link which contains useful information about the cooperation between the Nepali government and the United Nations Development Programme.

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/nepal/docs/generic/Earthqauke%20Recovery%20Response%20Final.pdf

Cambodia

Cambodia is a very good case for research regarding climate change, due to the natural disasters that have occurred in this land, and the impact on the livelihoods of people in rural areas. In 2011 a human development report was created by the UNDP on climate change in the area of Southeast Asia, specializing in Cambodia, and the need for recovery and disaster preparedness. The report adduces the country's situation as far as the rapid climate changes are concerned and the progress that has been made during the recent years.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

USAID Nepal

This programme aims to increase employment opportunities in order to encourage-economic-stability.

<u>Mercy Corps</u>

Mercy Corps is an international organization that encourages people to recover from conflict, build better lives and resilience.

<u>BRACED (Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters)</u>

BRACED, as its name reveals, focuses on resilient building and on climate change in the region of South and Southeast Asia, in the African Sahel and its neighbouring countries. There are many projects that are being run by BRACED at the moment in association with other major organizations regarding this issue.

<u>Youth Initiative</u>

The organization Youth Initiative has launched a project named Youth Advocacy for Accountability and Transparency that aims to raise awareness among young people and increase their participation in local decision making and their involvement in community issues.

<u>FAR Programme (Framework for Accessing Resilience)</u>

This Programme is a two-year project that was created in 2014 by the international organization Interpeace and was launched to better understand address the key areas of fragility within communities and to address resilience within a conflict or a conflict-prone country. This programme includes involvement in three countries, namely Liberia, Guatemala, and East Timor.

<u>International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding</u>

The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding is an international forum that introduces 'fragile' countries to more political dialogue. The members in the forum are composed of countries that are conflict affected or fragile and members of other Non-governmental organizations and Unions.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
September 2006	UNICEF creates Project 'Return and Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups'.
2011	Creation of Human Development Report on the climate change and the rural livelihood of Cambodia.
2014	Interpeace launched the FAR Program (Framework for Accessing Resilience).
25th-27th October 2016	Resilience Building Week hosted in Jordan.

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

Resilience Building Week

From the 25-27 October 2016, the governments of Finland, Canada, and the United Nations Development Programme hosted a Resilience Building Week in Amman, Jordan sharing knowledge and information as far as resilient programming policies and strategies are concerned.
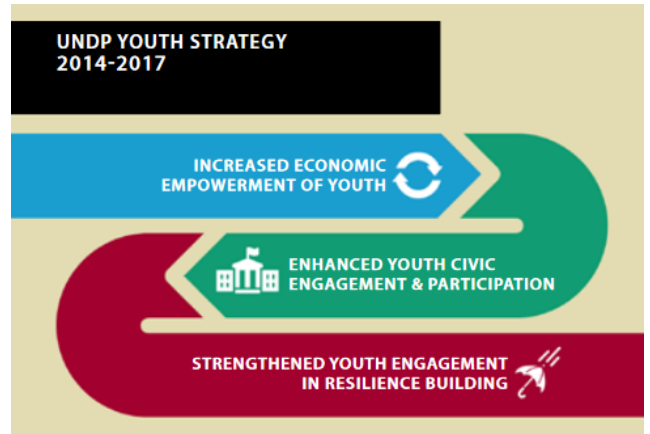

United Nations Development ProgrammeYouth Strategy 2014-2017

This is a strategy that explains The United Nations' commitment to youth. The United Nations Development Programme has drafted a report that explains the basic principles of youth engagement and the concept and outcomes of the strategy.

Possible Solutions

So as for resilience to be achieved one needs to understand the differences between communities that have endured conflict and the ones that have 'survived' a natural disaster.

- Natural disasters mainly take people by surprise and in most cases, for example in the case of an earthquake, entire livelihoods may be destroyed in a matter of seconds or minutes. These incidents influence the country's young population severely since these persons along with others may lose their family, their home, their fortune and their future in a variety of fields, such as educational and financial.

- Although the result of a community might be extremely similar there is a different approach to it, when it comes to post-conflict communities. Conflict is, in contrast to natural disasters, something most of the time predictable and the process that leads to the aforementioned dreadful results may last for months, even years. Nevertheless, action must be taken after the conflict has ended especially from young people in order to form peaceful and resilient communities.

Resilience can be achieved in multiple ways. In order to mobilize and empower young people as agents of positive change in the society, especially in post-conflict and post-natural disaster contexts, there needs to be a stabilization of livelihoods of young people, so as for social cohesion to be created. Conflict can be prevented by promoting alternative lifestyles and livelihoods to young people, thus avoiding those joining armed groups in desperate attempts of survival. So as for the youth to be able to engage in resilience building, there is the dire need for a relatively stable personal background. Specifically, young people should receive economic and educational reinforcement and in cases where the is no infrastructural background for this the United Nations with the assistance of NGO's would establish the fundamental outline. Should this be put into force, then the society and each community should recognize the efforts of the youth and allow and encourage them to participate in policy and decision-making processes regarding the stabilization of their region and the prospect of building resilience. In addition, young people should be more empowered to participatee in peacebuilding initiatives and should be mobilized to establish and support initiatives with the ultimatum of strengthening their community.

Furthermore, a useful tactic for them to engage in peacemaking processes and not to contribute to violence would be governments offering, with the help of international organizations, awareness and training courses to young people, which

will eventually lead to a decrease in the potential of an armed conflict. Another solution would be to analyze and implement strategies regarding contexts of conflict, post-conflict and humanitarian crisis. Concluding, young people have a lot of potential and are capable of building resilience within their communities should they be given the appropriate guidance. Therefore, a solution suitable to the matter would be governments and Non-Governmental Organizations organizing seminars, awareness campaigns, and initiatives in which young people could participate and inform themselves about this topic.

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