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Psychosocial Assistance for Youth: Toward Reconstruction for Peace in Angola

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Following decades of war, Angolan youth are at risk of continuing cycles of violence and need support in developing positive behaviors and social roles. Accordingly, a community-based program, conducted in Angola 1998–2001, taught youth life skills, provided peer support and peace education, educated adults about youth, and engaged youth as workers on community development projects. The main results included increased adult awareness of the situation and needs of youth, improved youth-adult relations, reduced perceptions of youth as troublemakers, reduced fighting between youth, increased community planning, and increased perceptions that youth make a positive contribution to the community. The results suggest that a dual focus on youth and community development contributes to peacebuilding and the disruption of cycles of violence.

The Cold War featured intense, global international conflict, mostly along the fault lines of the U.S.–Soviet confrontation. In that era, the psychology of conflict prevention focused primarily on reducing the threat of nuclear destruction and managing and resolving international conflict (Oskamp, 1985; White, 1986). Children were regarded mostly as potential victims, as much research examined children's nuclear fears and their developmental implications (e.g., Mack & Snow, 1986).

The end of the Cold War both revealed and helped to usher in changes in the nature of armed conflict, with young people as important actors. At the turn of

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the previous century, most wars were fought between states, and nearly 90% of the casualties were combatants. Over several decades, partially obscured by the focus on the Cold War, the frequency of interstate war declined, and the rate of intrastate or internal wars rose. During the 1990s, the approximately 25–35 wars that occurred each year were fought mostly within state boundaries (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg, & Strand, 2002) and approximately 90% of the casualties were noncombatants, mostly women and children. Nearly half the conflicts have lasted 10 or more years (Smith, 1997) and exhibit a pattern of cyclic violence that blurs the boundaries between war and peace.

In addition, youth are significant actors in contemporary conflicts (Brett & McCallin, 1996; Wessells, 1998a). Owing partly to the prevalence of lightweight weapons such as AK-47 assault rifles, even 10-year-old children are increasingly becoming soldiers. Although accurate figures do not exist, analysts estimate that worldwide, approximately 300,000 soldiers are children (Machel, 2001), defined under international law as people under 18 years of age. The majority of child soldiers are between the ages of 15 –and 18 years, although children as young as 7 years have been reported (e.g., Wessells, 1997). Girls as well as boys are involved in military activities globally (Mazurana, McKay, Carlson, & Kasper, 2002; McKay & Mazurana, 2004), and some of the worst atrocities in armed conflicts have been committed by young people, including teenagers (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2002). In Sierra Leone, for example, some young people who had been forced by the Revolutionary United Front to take drugs committed mutilations such as cutting people's arms off (Wessells & Jonah, in press). Rogue commanders often prefer young soldiers because they can be intimidated and manipulated, and many are fearless, unaware of their own mortality, and willing to take on the most dangerous assignments (Brett & McCallin, 1996). Even following the signing of a ceasefire, former youth soldiers, having few options for earning a living, often use violence to meet their basic needs, creating waves of criminal violence that follow waves of political violence (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000; Wessells & Monteiro, 2001).

To contribute to peace in the post-Cold War era, peace psychology has expanded its focus to include intrastate armed conflicts and the challenges of youth violence prevention (Wessells, 1998b). This article aims to show the contributions of peace psychology in a protracted, intrastate conflict through holistic approaches to supporting youth. Using war-torn Angola as a case study, it outlines the situation of youth in war zones and identifies key tasks of psychosocial assistance for youth. Emphasizing the importance of prevention, it points out the need for assistance programs for youth who have not engaged in military activities but who are at key choice points in their lives. Then it presents a multi-province program for supporting positive behaviors and social roles among youth.

Youth in the Angolan War

"Youth" is a culturally constructed concept that exhibits enormous variability (Boyden & Mann, 2000). Western definitions of youth focus mostly on adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 years. In South Africa, however, "youth" includes people to 35 years of age, and in Sierra Leone, it includes 50-year-olds. In many developing countries, including Angola, particularly in rural areas where traditions remain relatively strong, a person is regarded as an adult once he or she has completed the culturally scripted rites of passage, typically by the age of 14 or 15 years. These considerations caution against universalizing Western definitions of "youth."

Negotiating these definitional issues in Angola is challenging, but possible. Many rural Angolans regard a 15-year-old who has completed the initiation rights to manhood as an adult. Yet Angolans recognize that people between 13 and 18 years of age, regardless of whether they have completed the cultural rites of passage, are in transition, lack definite commitments and family responsibilities typically borne by a 25-year-old, and are at a challenging stage in which they need support. Further, they view the label "youth" as not implying that someone is less than adult. For these reasons, this article defines youth as people between 13 and 18 years of age, recognizing that they may be regarded locally as young adults in transition.

The Angolan War

The Angolan War began in 1961 as a liberation struggle from colonial Portugal, with liberation achieved in 1975. The resulting power vacuum created a struggle between three and subsequently two rival groups, the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and UNITA (the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). The socialist MPLA became the government of Angola (GoA). This internal struggle became a proxy war in the superpower contest between the United States, which backed UNITA, and the USSR, which backed the GoA (Minter, 1994). Following the end of the Cold War, U.S. support for UNITA waned, and a temporary ceasefire established in the 1991 Bicesse Accords enabled Angola to conduct its first free elections. Although President Eduardo dos Santos defeated Jonas Savimbi, the UNITA leader, Savimbi rejected the election results, plunging the country into war again. From 1992 to 1994, severe fighting occurred, and UNICEF estimated that as many as 1,000 people per day were dying by 1993. Since UNITA controlled particular areas and the government controlled others, Angola was effectively a country inside a country.

In 1994, the Lusaka Protocol established a ceasefire and enabled temporary, if partial, demobilization, the construction of a government of national unity and

reconciliation that included former UNITA officials, and the formation of an integrated national army. Unfortunately, many UNITA troops remained in the field, continued to control the diamond mines that subsidized their war efforts (Cilliers & Dietrich, 2000), and limited access to UNITA-controlled areas. The GoA, which had subsidized its own war efforts through an enormously lucrative oil industry (Hodges, 2001), became increasingly frustrated over UNITA failures to implement the terms of the Lusaka Protocol. Sporadic attacks by UNITA troops on humanitarian convoys and expansion of its area of control escalated tensions, leading to renewed war by December, 1998.

The fighting that occurred from December, 1998 to March, 2002 was not only vicious but focused more on rural areas than cities. As the GoA achieved control over cities, UNITA fought mostly using guerilla tactics, raiding rural villages, destroying all the homes, stealing animals, and looting. In areas believed to harbor government supporters, they used search and destroy tactics of killing and destroying everything and everyone (Richardson, 2001). As terrified civilians fled, the numbers of displaced people increased sharply. By late 2001, nearly one-third of the population was displaced, and many lived in difficult conditions without adequate water, sanitation, food, or health care. The death of Savimbi and his second in command in February, 2002 set the stage for a ceasefire, signed in April, 2002.

Situation of Youth

Virtually all youth have been affected by the war either directly or indirectly. It is very difficult to find an Angolan family that did not lose one or more family members to war. Although accurate statistics are unavailable, significant numbers of youth experienced one or more severe stressors such as attack, flight from war, fear of dying, loss of loved ones, separation from families, hunger, and seeing dead people (Wessells & Monteiro, 2001). As villages were attacked, youth saw their homes and belongings destroyed, creating grave doubts about the future. Of the 4 million displaced people in Angola, approximately half are children, including many youth. Since Angola is one of the three most heavily mined countries in the world, many youth are amputees and face problems of disfigurement, disability, and stigmatization (Dastoor & Mocellin, 1997).

Throughout the Angolan war, youth have frequently served as soldiers, primarily for UNITA (Verhey, 2001; Wessells, 2002a). When UNITA attacked villages, it often swept up the youth who had become separated from their families and villages, forcing them to become soldiers. In addition, UNITA often recruited youth by going to a village and demanding that the soba, the village chief, provide a quota of young recruits or else the entire village would be destroyed (Wessells, 2002a). In the military, youth played various roles such as cooks, spies, porters, and combatants. These roles placed them in danger and led many to witness or perpetrate beatings, killings, and other human rights abuses. Young girls were also

involved in military activity. Typically, girl soldiers were abducted and forced to serve as porters, cooks, spies, or combatants. Most girls, however, served as sex slaves since they were assigned to a particular soldier, often the one who had captured them, whom they were expected to "service" sexually. Girls were often required to dance all night, ostensibly to "entertain" troops but in reality to keep troops awake and prepared for sudden military activity. Unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases often result from such practices.

Youth suffered also as a result of structural violence, which can be as deadly to children and youth as is direct attack (Schwebel & Christie, 2001). The war damaged health posts and services, disrupted food security, and damaged sanitation and access to clean water. As health-related problems soared, UNICEF designated Angola in 1999 the country least safe for children. Rising poverty led many youth to engage in exploitative and unsafe labor to help meet the basic needs of their families. Many young girls, for example, turned to prostitution as their main avenue of earning a living. Sadly, the war shattered education, an essential avenue for escaping poverty. Few Angolan youth participated in secondary education, and most youth received the equivalent of only 4 or 5 years of education.

This context has created high levels of risk for Angolan youth. Displaced youth often suffer emotional wounds associated with loss, uprooting, and destruction of home and property. Youth who are separated from their parents are at increased risk of abduction by military groups. Others who, mired in poverty, facing high levels of unemployment, and desperate to meet basic needs, are drawn into crime. Furthermore, all Angolan youth have grown up amidst normalized violence at multiple levels. Family violence in forms such as spouse abuse and harsh corporal punishment is widespread, and is amplified by problems such as alcohol abuse and poverty. At the community level, violence has also been prevalent either by way of military fighting, crime, or both. Young children can be seen on streets in nearly any Angolan city playing war games and acting out fighting they have seen or heard about. Feeling powerless and respecting military might, many youth covet the gun and the military uniform. In many respects, Angola is a system of violence that both damages youth and places them at risk of continuing cycles of violence.

Angolan youth also face significant challenges associated with competing identities, values, and social roles. Angolan youth, like their counterparts worldwide (Arnett, 2002), relate to global culture with its youth-oriented focus on music, clothing, computers, and other material goods. To obtain these goods or to help their families, youth often act as relatively autonomous business people. This autonomy and attraction to outside values creates conflict with traditional roles, which expect youth to obey authorities rather than exhibit autonomy and to place spiritual over material well-being. Angolan youth can learn to negotiate multiple social identities and to integrate different values and social roles. The process, however, can be confusing for youth, who often feel harshly criticized by adults

and not respected for their abilities. As a result, relations with adults are tense and a significant source of stress for many youth.

Priorities in Psychosocial Support

In addressing this situation, many Western or Western-trained psychologists tend to focus on trauma and healing through counseling to allow the expression and working through of painful emotions. Although relatively high prevalence rates of posttraumatic stress disorder occur in Angola (McIntyre & Ventura, 2003), a focus on trauma and comorbid disorders such as depression and anxiety provides a weak starting point in a situation such as Angola. Angolan youths' needs are holistic, and they see their emotional suffering as inextricably connected with poverty and current difficult conditions rather than past experiences of violence (Eyber, 2002). A focus on trauma is too narrow to address the wider array of needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and a positive, meaningful role in society. What are needed are more holistic approaches that help meet physical needs, strengthen supports for children and youth, and build the positive skills and competencies needed to participate meaningfully in society (Women's Commission, 2000).

In addition, trauma approaches raise issues of cultural bias and the imposition of outsider views. In rural areas, people attribute events in the visible world to events in the invisible world of the ancestors. Having a spiritual cosmology, local people often regard spiritual stresses as primary, even though the trauma idiom offers little insight into them. In one case, a former child soldier reported having problems with sleeping and concentrating. Asked why, he said he had killed a man during a fire fight and that the man's spirit came to him in the night, asking "Why did you do this to me?" Trauma approaches are not designed to handle such problems, which are probably better addressed by the conduct of purification rituals by local healers to get rid of the bad spirits (Honwana, 1997; Wessells & Monteiro, 2004). Moreover, trauma approaches tend to view emotional problems as individual and as indicating the need for individualized treatment. In rural Angola, however, such problems are understood to be communal rather than individual. People believe that if the boy comes home before having completed a purification ritual, he will bring spiritual contamination to his family and village, causing misfortune, bad health, crop failures, or other problems. Further, when trauma counselors arrive, offering presumed solutions, few of which have been validated in the Angolan context, local people silence their own local beliefs and resources for coping (Wessells, 1999). In fact, local idioms of understanding illness and health are more predictive of people's well-being or dysfunctionality than are Western constructs (Eyber, 2002). Moreover, trauma approaches, which are reactive, fail to address the need for preventing additional harm through nonviolent processes for handling conflict.

At best, trauma healing is a small part of a much wider mosaic of processes needed to support war-affected youth. To assist war-affected youth, proactive, holistic approaches are needed that protect youth, prevent violence, and enable

sustainable community development (Boothby, 1996; Wessells & Monteiro, 2001). Among the key priorities are the following.

Social integration. Separated youth, particularly those in their early teens, need to be reunited with their families or extended families both to provide support and to prevent abduction and harm. In addition, former child soldiers need to receive support in reintegrating with families and communities. Girl soldiers, who have been invisible, are particularly in need of reintegration support. This integration gives youth access to family, peer, and community supports and helps to restore the normal flow of development and the daily activities that provide a sense of continuity amidst change and stress (Gibbs, 1997; Wessells & Monteiro, 2001).

Health supports. Angolan youth are at high risk of diseases such as malaria and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Young women are at serious risk due to problems associated with pregnancy and birth, making maternal child health a high priority for women. In addition to access to health care, health education and peer support for healthy behaviors are high priorities.

Economic assistance. For many youth, poverty, unemployment, and lack of means of earning a living are the greatest stressors. Economic assistance is needed in forms such as small loans for income-generating activities and small grants to purchase seeds and tools or basic items needed to earn a living. In addition, youth need education and life skills such as basic literacy and skills that help to earn a sustainable income.

Positive social role. In Angola, as in other countries, youth are frequently viewed as troublemakers or as people who do not have community interests in mind. To enable youth to choose positive venues of action, they need to have access to positive life options and to achieve a positive role in their communities.

Peace education. Following decades of war and normalization of violence, youth need to learn the importance of peace, nonviolent means of handling conflict, and ways of relating with others that promote tolerance. This is particularly important if youth are to become agents of peace rather than forces that continue war and cycles of violence.

Youth participation. Since youth are actors and survivors who have significant capacities, it is vital to regard them as more than victims or beneficiaries. By engaging youth as advisors in developing programs and as agents in implementing them, youth take ownership for projects and acquire new competencies through their participation.

A Multi-Province Program for Supporting Youth

Recognizing these priorities and the need to provide assistance on a wide, national scale, Christian Children's Fund (CCF) conducted a youth-focused program during 1998–2001 in Luanda, the capital city, and the provinces of Benguela, Huila,

Huambo, Moxico, and Uige. The program used a strategy of partnering with other international and local organizations to help meet needs in areas such as health care. Designed mainly as a prevention program to be implemented in relatively secure areas where long-term development was possible, the program also had an emergency component that consisted primarily of support to displaced children. Initially, the plan called for a 90% to 10% ratio of development (youth) work to emergency work. However, the re-eruption of war in December, 1998, necessitated the allocation of an increasing percentage of resources to urgently needed emergency assistance. Further, deteriorating security necessitated the closing of the program offices in Uige and Moxico in August, 2001. It is against this background of war and change that the program can be understood.

Conceptual Framework

The program was framed within five intersecting conceptual elements. The first is an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Dawes & Donald, 2000) that views development as mediated by micro-, meso-, and macro-level transactions with agents such as family, peers, community groups, and wider institutions. Second is a view of youth that recognizes their capacities as actors, the transitional nature of their situation, the importance for youth of defining identity and a place within society, and the differences between rural and urban areas of developing countries (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1950, 1968). Together, these elements suggest that to improve youths' situation, one needs to take a community approach that develops youths' capacities, improves adult perceptions of youth, and increases youths' positive role within their communities.

The third element, a social disruption analysis of war (Higson-Smith & Killian, 2000), views armed conflict as having a destabilizing influence on multiple social levels. Communities, for example, are often torn apart, and as people scatter during displacement, civic groups and networks and processes of collective planning and action are disrupted. Fourth is a well-being framework (Ahearn, 2000) that avoids pathologizing war-affected youth, emphasizes the importance of resilience, and views community empowerment and collective action as a means of reestablishing people's sense of control and ability to rebuild their lives (Friere, 1970). These two elements point towards the reestablishment of community, the strengthening of collective planning and action, and the importance of people engaging in normal activities in public spaces as a means of repairing the torn fabric of community and recreating a sense of continuity.

The fifth element is a systems-theoretic perspective that links healing, nonviolent conflict transformation, and social justice (Lederach, 1997; Wessells & Bretherton, 2000). To move beyond the past, it is vital that Angolans see material improvements in their circumstances since their stresses are intimately connected with poverty and social injustice. In addition, work on healing needs to be

complemented by attention to the nonviolent handling of conflict. This perspective led the program to include components on peace education, nonviolent conflict resolution, and material development.

These elements were situated in a critical social perspective that questions the presumed universality of Western ideas about mental health and the definition of childhood and youth (Boyden & Mann, 2000) and invites careful thinking about the tensions between insider and outsider perspectives, as explicated in the literature on participatory action research (e.g., Brydon-Miller & Tolman, 1997). This emphasis on the importance of respecting local culture was consistent with what had been learned and practiced in previous CCF programs, which featured the intermixing of Western and local methods of healing and aiding social reintegration (Wessells & Monteiro, 2001).

The Community-Based Youth Program

The goal of the program was to improve youths' social integration into their communities. The specific objectives were (1) to reinforce key adults' knowledge of youth's psychosocial needs, (2) to improve youths' life skills, and (3) to strengthen youths' positive role in the community. The program strategy was to strengthen both adults' understanding of youth and youths' life skills, including skills of nonviolent conflict resolution, peer support, literacy, and income generation. The program strategy was also to empower youth as community development agents who made tangible contributions to community-selected initiatives such as rebuilding schools or building playgrounds or community centers.

To prepare for the program, the CCF national staff, which had extensive experience implementing community-based psychosocial programs in Angola, developed a training curriculum and a detailed implementation plan. The curriculum was designed to enable effective program implementation in each province by a team of three local CCF staff—all Angolan—selected on the basis of their understanding of the local language and situation, respect by the community, and their willingness to assist youth. The topics included analysis of the current context; child and youth development; adolescence and physical and psychological changes; problems in relationships between adults and youth; issues of reproductive health; violence in society and the community; traditional and local ways of helping people affected by violence; and peace education, including nonviolent conflict resolution. The national staff conducted a 4-week training for the province-based teams and subsequently provided follow-up support through monthly site visits to the province-based teams.

The province-based teams implemented the program in a sequence of seven steps. First, each team conducted a situation assessment in its province to guide the selection of program areas that (a) had high levels of need and few supports available, (b) were relatively secure, and (c) contained communities that expressed

interest in participating and partnering with CCF. Second, following local cultural scripts, the CCF team met with the traditional chief (soba) to explain the purpose of the program and request his support, which provided a gateway to the community. CCF staff also met with local elders, influential women, and other adults who worked with youth, explaining the purpose of the program and gaining their support.

The third step was to identify systematically the key people, groups, and networks locally that supported youth, and mapping the local church groups and women's groups that could be mobilized in programs to support youth. Previous program experience indicates that working through these local resources increases sustainability, builds a sense of local ownership for the program, and facilitates learning about indigenous supports such as traditional healers and particular rituals. The community mapping exercise identified community groups or members who may be excluded from the main circle of activities, services, and power. Knowing the local power structure, one can take steps to avoid inadvertently supporting particular power elites or even amplifying conflict at the community level.

Next, CCF staff identified the key adults and youths who were in the best position to support youth. In this fourth step, the selected individuals participated in training seminars, which pairs of CCF staff conducted for groups of approximately 20 community people. The adult training seminars, which ran for 1 week, covered the topics identified previously and used participatory methodologies appropriate for people who had little formal education. For example, to illustrate the shattering effects of violence on a community, the trainers gave people a sheet of newspaper and asked them to rip it to shreds, which they did with great zeal. Next, the trainers asked the participants to spend several minutes putting the paper back together. In addition to producing frustration, this exercise stimulated discussion about why it is so difficult to rebuild following armed conflict. The youth training seminars were conducted separately to enable sharper focus on youth issues and to allow free discussion of problems between youth and adults. Both the youth and adult seminars used an elicitive methodology (Lederach, 1995) designed to bring forward local ideas and resources for assisting youth. Indeed, training was conceptualized as a two-way process in which Western psychologists brought some tools to the table and local people also brought tools to the table. The participants decided which tools to use and how.

In the fifth step, communities selected a project that would assist local children and youth, include significant numbers of young people, and stay within the program budget. Youth and women participated in this community dialogue and decision making, although men made the actual decisions in keeping with traditional Angolan gender roles. The most frequently made choices included a soccer field, basketball court, latrine, outhouse, or primary school. Sixth, community members participated in building the community project, with CCF providing the materials and the community providing volunteer labor. Youth played a prominent

role in the construction, enabling them to show visibly their concern about community improvement.

The seventh step was to implement a variety of youth-focused activities. Youth groups conducted peer dialogues on issues of their own choice and supported each other in handling difficult issues. In some villages, the youth groups organized community drama as a means of educating the village about key issues such as HIV/AIDS. For a limited number of youth, professional training was provided via apprenticeships in crafts such as sewing and carpentry. To promote earning an income, groups of five or more youth were taught to form solidarity groups that received loans, which they then used to purchase key business items or tools to build things that they sold. To build life skills such as communication, cooperation, and nonviolent handling of conflict, youth also engaged in recreational activities such as soccer games and dancing. Because the program also had a component that provided structured activities for younger children, youth were invited to volunteer to participate in a 3-day training and to subsequently work with young children in organizing age-appropriate activities. This activity, like others, was designed to increase youths' positive role within the community, as caring for children in a recognized way of helping mothers and of demonstrating responsibility.

Achievements and Outcomes

The program monitoring and evaluation system used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative measures to track progress in implementation and assess outcomes. Although an intensive summative evaluation had been planned, deteriorating security and the need to devote additional resources to emergency work made this impossible. The preliminary results reported here reflect the work conducted from January, 1998 through August, 2001.

Across provinces, a total of 77 training seminars were conducted for 1,812 adults. Changes in adults' awareness as a result of the training seminars were assessed by means of pre- and posttests that asked to randomly selected participants ($n = 350$) open-ended questions such as what do children and youth need for healthy growth and development, how do children and youth behave after having gone through war situations, and how can children and youth who have gone through war situations be helped? Due to very low literacy levels, these and other questions were asked orally in the local languages, some terms of which lack English equivalents.

The responses to open-ended questions were coded by means of a group categorization and dialogue process that fit the collectivist orientation of the Angolan staff, who deemed independent ratings and statistical measures of reliability to be less accurate and trustworthy than group discussion and decision making. First, each response was written on a card, with no indication whether it was a pretest or posttest response. Having spread all the responses to a question on a large

Table 1. Items Generated by Adults in Response to the Question "How do Children and Youth Behave After Having Gone Through War Situations?"

Item	Pretest (%)	Posttest (%)
Isolation, timidity	5.0	34.7
Sadness, "wounded"	19.8	47.4
Hatred, revolt, violence	12.4	37.6
Sleep problems (nightmares, insomnia, bad dreams)	1.6	23.8
Lack of respect toward adults, disobedience	19.8	39.2
Delinquency, addiction (drinking, smoking, drug addiction)	9.0	28.3
Fear, lack of safety	11.1	29.9
Petulant (easily annoyed, constantly nervous)	4.2	22.9
Lose trust	5.3	18.6

table, staff members then grouped responses together into batches of responses that seemed to go together. Often, use of similar terms such as "fear" led items to be grouped together and suggested the category name. Through extensive discussion, the group tried out different groupings, named the categories, analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of each, and revised the category scheme until all responses had been categorized and all group members said they felt they had achieved the best groupings of the responses.

Table 1 shows that the participants demonstrated on the posttests, which occurred immediately following training, increased awareness of the emotional and behavioral effects of war that had been discussed during the seminar. The percentage of trainees who could generate five or more emotional reactions of children and youth increased from 7.1 (pretest) to 63.3 (posttest). As shown in Table 2, the training seminars led to increased awareness of the emotional factors important in the healthy development of children and youth. Trainees entered having strong awareness of the importance of physical factors such as food and health. Interestingly, the percentage of trainees who generated "clothing" increased.

In focus group discussions, trainees reported that the seminars had increased their awareness of how important clothing is for young people's self-esteem and

Table 2. Items Generated by Adults in Response to the Question "What Do Children and Youth Need for Healthy Growth and Development?"

Item	Pretest (%)	Posttest (%)
Love	22.7	64.4
Affection/caress	30.5	62.0
Respect	8.0	33.2
Communication	3.0	25.9
Stimulation	0.9	21.5
Clothing	28.6	47.0
Health	36.1	54.3
Hygiene	31.2	38.9
Good food	66.7	69.0

Table 3. Numbers of Youth who Participated in the Program Activities

	Number of Youth Participants		
Activities	Male	Female	Total
Training seminars	663	568	1,231
Sport & recreational activities	2,025	1,483	3,508
Professional training	40	199	239
Income generation	11	30	41
Community projects	1,518	735	2,253
Youth volunteers trained to work with children	244	199	443

social integration. In many areas, children and youth reported that they avoided going to school if they lacked appropriate clothing since they felt ashamed of their poverty. Although not shown in tabular form, increases similar in magnitude occurred in trainees' ability to name ways in which children and youth who have gone through war situations can be helped. In particular, adults showed increased awareness of the importance of music and songs, games and jokes, conversation, story telling, dance, and traditional practices such as death ceremonies.

Key informant interviews with the sobas and focus group discussions with elder men and women indicated that the training seminars and other activities had changed adults' perceptions of village youth and increased awareness of youth's situation and capacity to take on positive roles and responsibilities. Nearly all said that previously they had viewed youth as disobedient and as troublemakers, whereas by the end of the program they understood that youth's behavior and attitudes reflected their war experiences. Adults agreed unanimously that youth make a strong contribution to the community through their high levels of participation in the community projects (see Table 3). A frequently made statement in focus groups, which often elicited much nodding of heads around the circle, was that adults and youth had improved relations as a result of the program. Many adults commented that youth behaved in a more respectful manner, took an active interest in learning traditions and talking with elders, and demonstrated leadership in improving the community and educating people about problems such as HIV/AIDS. In each focus group, adults also reported that the community projects had helped meet community needs and enabled community organization. Many reported feeling more hopeful as a result of their increased collective planning and action.

Table 3 summarizes the participation in program activities. High levels of participation occurred in the training seminars, which youth unanimously applauded as having provided the first opportunity to discuss youth issues, to take stock of how they have been affected, and to begin planning for the future. In focus group discussions, youth reported consistently that the issues raised in the seminars—particularly reproductive health, relations with adults, resolving conflicts nonviolently—had sparked such keen interest that they had become focal

points of follow-up discussion in the peer dialogues, which youth themselves organized informally. In contrast to the local norms of boys' and girls' separation, the peer dialogues engaged boys and girls together. Both boys and girls reported that this had led to cross-gender friendships, increased willingness to talk about difficult issues such as STDs across gender lines, and heightened respect for the other group. Youth stated unanimously that the program activities such as peer dialogues and training seminars were the first structured activities for youth in their villages and that the activities had provided a sense of structure and organization and a space for positive interaction that had never existed before. Unanimously, they expressed a strong desire for more activities, and some outlined plans for future activities.

Youth participation in the community projects was enthusiastic and extensive, with more boys participating than girls due to the heavy physical labor involved. Focus group discussions revealed consistently that youth were very proud of their constructions, had better relations with adults, and believed they had acquired a positive role within their community. As one youth stated, "Before, we were seen as troublemakers. But now they [adults] treat us as human beings and we are respected." Youth also reported that their participation in activities such as professional training, volunteer care for younger children, community drama, and education about issues such as HIV/AIDS increased their prestige at the village level. Youth reported frequently that the program had given them a voice and their first opportunity to develop their potential.

With respect to nonviolent conflict resolution, the program had several positive outcomes, one of which was a reduction of tensions that arise when recently displaced people move into an area and compete for scarce resources with more permanent residents. In Cambila, Uige, the CCF program staff brought together the leaders of adjacent displaced and relatively stable communities to broker cooperative planning of a shared playground. The leaders of both communities reported that this cooperation, which embodied the superordinate goals strategy (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961), had been very useful in reducing the tensions that had existed and improving intergroup relations. Further, youth reported consistently that as a result of the training and the peer dialogues about nonviolence, they fought less with peers, were more likely to use nonviolent means of handling conflict, and had developed more positive relations with siblings and other family members. Adult reports corroborated these self-reported improvements.

Youth also reported significant improvements in their life skills. Through activities such as soccer matches and dancing, youth said they had learned skills of cooperation, communication, and nonviolent conflict management. Adults who worked with the youth or who observed them on a daily basis attested to the accuracy of these reports and said that fewer youth were isolated or kept to themselves. Both youth and adults reported that events such as soccer matches had powerful social effects such as bringing people together for enjoyment in public spaces,

facilitating positive interactions with neighboring villages, and creating excitement. Many youth reported they had acquired new hope since they had skills that could help them to move forward with their lives.

The program also encountered significant challenges such as gender inequities. The soccer games were almost exclusively for boys. A large gender disparity early in the program in the levels of participation in recreational activity led to the expansion of girl-friendly activities such as dancing. Although this helped, the program did not achieve the gender equity that had been intended. Boys' participation was higher in the training seminars and the volunteer assistance to younger children. Girls attributed their lower level of participation to their greater workloads and household responsibility for gathering food and water and earning money. This interpretation fit with the fact that more girls than boys participated in the professional training and the income-generating activities, the latter of which proved difficult to implement because of very high inflation rates and pervasive competition among teenagers for money for their families.

Conclusion

The results of this program, although preliminary, suggest that complementary youth empowerment and community development foci provide a viable platform for peacebuilding in Angola. Even in conflict zones racked by poverty and other stressors, an empowerment approach backed by modest inputs can mobilize young people for development rather than fighting, enable them to achieve a positive role in their villages, strengthen attitudes and skills conducive to nonviolence, and build the peer support and life skills required for establishing meaningful lives as civilians. Ironically, the peace process disrupted a full program evaluation, as massive population movements following the ceasefire necessitated a swing by the CCF teams into emergency mode. If psychosocial assistance is to mature and if peace psychology is to make its fullest contribution, it is vital that programs be documented systematically and causal pathways to program impact be identified. Numerous multidisciplinary groups are taking on these challenges of documentation and impact assessment.

At present, the program emphasis on youth and community development is more timely than ever. The current demobilization process in Angola, for example, defined soldiers as people over 20 years of age, thereby making former child and youth soldiers invisible and cutting them off from whatever benefits and reintegration supports soldiers will receive. Former youth soldiers and all war-affected youth should receive ample opportunities for developing life skills, positive life options, and meaningful roles within their communities. As UNITA peoples enter the public sphere, they need opportunities to engage in community development to meet basic needs, establish social justice, and integrate into civil society.

Table 4. Potentially Transferable Program Elements

Element	Strategy	Implementation Issues
Multi-province teams	– Provide assistance on a wide scale – Build local capacities by using national staff	– Coordination – Support for provincial teams by well- trained national team – Quality monitoring
Culturally appropriate community entry	– Strengthen local cultural practices – Build relations with gatekeepers	– Gender privileging – Requires understanding of local beliefs, practices, and norms
Community mapping and working through local groups	– Increase sustainability by partnering with existing community structures and processes – Analyze power relations to avoid privileging	– Managing disputes or turf struggles between different community groups – Need ongoing analysis of inclusivity and who benefits
Blending of Western and local approaches	–Mobilize local resources for supporting youth – Avoid imposition of outside approaches	– Requires ongoing dialogue about power relations – Local staff may be unreceptive to the use of traditional approaches that they regard as atavistic
Community project	– Empower community – Develop spirit of local choice, ownership, and self-reliance – Make visible, physical improvements in villages	– Manage diversity of projects to simplify logistics – Requires effective local project management systems – Quality monitoring
Youth group activation	– Strengthen youth leadership – Provide emotional and social support for youth – Give youth a positive role and identity	– Identify key youth participants and leaders – Gender equity – Manage expectations

Although this article has focused on Angola, it is important to note that the approaches taken and lessons learned in this program may apply to other war-torn countries and situations in which youth have participated in armed conflict. In numerous respects, the Angolan case study presented here serves as a model having transferable elements that could be used to construct programs implemented by local agencies, by international nongovernmental agencies, or by intergovernmental initiatives to build peace. The coupling of this type of program with U.N. peacekeeping, for example, could strengthen conflict prevention following armed conflict (Miall, Ramsbotham, & Woodhouse, 1999).

Table 4 outlines the potentially transferable elements together with their strategic aspects and key implementation issues that need to be addressed in order to insure program effectiveness. For example, the construction and operation of provincial teams requires careful management, coordination, and quality monitoring through means such as site visits by the national team members, who use the visit as an opportunity to engage in problem-solving discussions with the provincial team. It is beyond the scope of this article, however, to discuss how to translate these elements into an actual program in other countries. Extensive tailoring of the

elements to the local context is vital, and alternate elements or program strategies may be indicated in other areas. Effective implementation also requires careful consideration of issues such as security, access, gender relations, local skill levels, relations between youth and between youth and adults, and the state of the local economy and government. Careful coordination with other initiatives is needed to embody a spirit of collaboration and capacity building with local governments. In some contexts, this can be done by working through local government agencies, whereas if the local government lacks capacity, it may be best to work through an NGO-government partnership that initially entails some NGO service delivery but that progressively builds the government's capacity.

Implementation strategies aside, the broader point is that the challenge of building peace in Angola and other societal conflicts is that of enabling youth to be peacebuilders rather than warriors. Strengthening this role of youth as peacebuilders may be a vital part of global efforts to limit terrorism (Wessells, 2002b). Viable models of how to engage youth as peacebuilders now exist (Machel, 2001). The question now is whether world leaders and citizens have the commitment to implement the models on the wide scale that is needed.

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