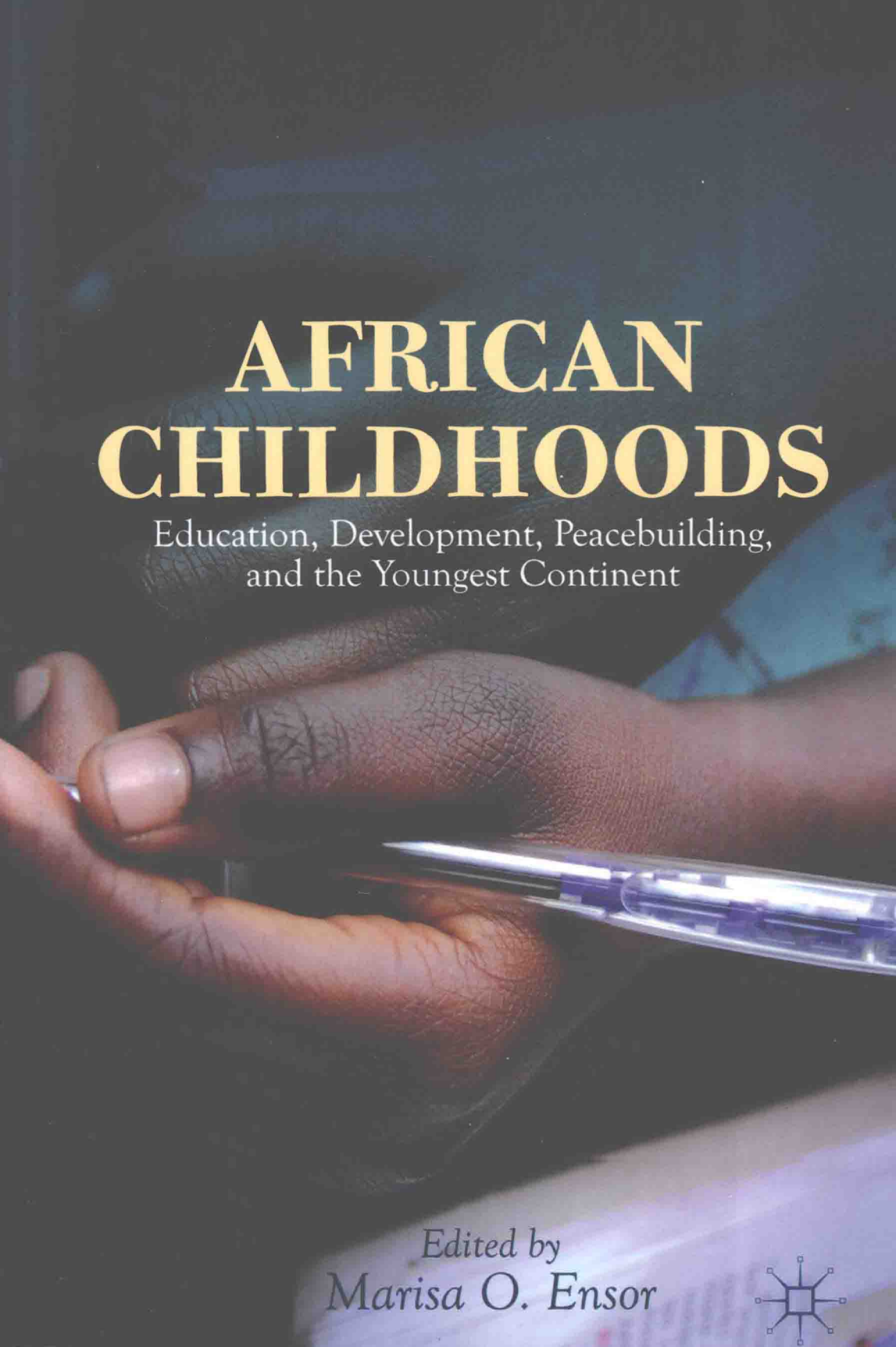

AFRICAN
CHILDHOODS
Education, Development, Peacebuilding,
and the Youngest Continent
Edited by
Marisa O. Ensor

AFRICAN CHILDHOODS

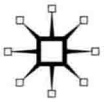
EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT, PEACEBUILDING, AND THE YOUNGEST CONTINENT

Edited by

Marisa O. Ensor

常州大学山书馆
藏书章

palgrave
macmillan



AFRICAN CHILDHOODS
Copyright © Marisa O. Ensor, 2012.

All rights reserved.

First published in 2012 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world, this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN: 978–1–137–02469–5

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

African childhoods : education, development, peacebuilding, and the youngest continent / edited by Marisa O. Ensor.
p. cm.
Includes index.
ISBN 978–1–137–02469–5 (alk. paper)
1. Children—Africa—Social conditions—21st century. 2. Economic development—Africa. 3. Education—Africa. 4. Children and politics. 5. Children and war—Africa—History. I. Ensor, Marisa O.

HQ792.A35A37 2012
305.23096—dc23 2012011145

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: September 2012

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bringing a multi-authored book to fruition always requires the coordinated efforts of numerous individuals. When contributors are preparing their chapters while traveling and working in many different countries, in a language that may not be their native tongue, and often facing challenging post-conflict conditions, the difficulties involved can be particularly daunting. I am deeply indebted to all of the authors for their commitment to this effort and their generous response to my invitation to participate in this project.

The idea for *African Childhoods* arose in the context of two related initiatives which reflect the acknowledged need for a better understanding of children's engagement in the related processes of education, development and peacebuilding around the world. The first was the 109th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), held in New Orleans in November 2010, which included numerous panels and presentations on a variety of children issues. The second meeting of the AAA's Children and Youth Interest Group provided further opportunities for the crystallization of our original plan to produce a volume on African children. This meeting, which took place in Charleston in February 2011, featured the work of several of the volume's contributors, many of whom are members of the Interest Group. Our research focuses on Africa, a large a diverse continent where the changing contours of the link among three of the processes that more directly affect children' lives—education, development and peacebuilding—have not been sufficiently interrogated.

The University of Tennessee provided material and logistic support for this project in the form of a generous Professional Development Grant which contributed funding to travel back to Uganda and South Sudan in the summer of 2011—where I did most of the initial editing for the volume—and a Chancellor's Grant for Faculty Research which included a teaching release to free time to complete the production of the book. I also wish to convey my gratitude to my colleagues from the Program of Disasters, Displacement and Human Rights, and the Center for the Study of Youth and Political Conflict for their encouragement and suggestions on this project. I am particularly grateful to Anne Victoria, a graduate research assistant at the University of Tennessee's Department of Anthropology, for her editorial assistance and marvelous organizational skills.

Finally, we all wish to express our deep appreciation and sincere admiration for all the African girls and boys whose lives and experiences, hopes and dreams as they embark on their remarkable journeys towards adulthood, constitute the focus of this volume.

May they inherit a more prosperous and peaceful future for their young continent and the world at large!

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

CONTENTS

List of Figures and Tables vii

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction: African Childhoods: Education, Development, Peacebuilding, and the Youngest Continent 1
Marisa O. Ensor

Part I The Political Economy of Child Survival in Africa: Agency, Labor, and Subsistence

1 Are the Barrels Empty? Are the Children Any Safer? Child Domestic Labor and Servitude in Ghana 19
C. Nana Derby

2 Matches but No Fire: Street Children in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania 33
Claire M. Wagner, Emmanuely D. Lyimo, and Steven Lwendo

3 Youth Agency and Survival Strategies in Sierra Leone's Postwar Informal Economy 47
John Idriss Lahai

4 Turkana Children's Contributions to Subsistence and Household Ecology in Kenya 61
Tammy Y. Watkins

Part II The Social Context of African Children: Kinship, Hardship, and Community

5 Children Who Take Care of Other Children in the Suburbs of Maputo, Mozambique 81
Elena Colonna

6 Seen but Not Heard: African Orphanhood in the Age of HIV/AIDS 95
Kristen E .Cheney

7 Militarization, Generational Conflict, and the Eritrean Refugee Crisis 109
Tricia M. Redeker Hepner

Part III The Human Capital of African Children: Youth Voices and Schooling in the Youngest Continent

8 Representing Youth: School Dramas and Youth Authority in Ghana 127
Cati Coe

9 Conceptualizing the Child: An Analysis of Early Childhood Care and Education Policy in Tanzania 141
Bethany C. Wilinski

10 Striving for Knowledge and Dignity: Young Qur'anic Students in Kano, Nigeria 157
Hannah Hoechner

Part IV African Children as Political Actors: Child-Inclusive Views on Peacebuilding and Social Change

11 Dinka Youth and the Culture of Formal Schooling in Postconflict South Sudan 173
Andrew I. Epstein

12 Educating Postconflict Societies: Lessons from Rwanda and Liberia 187
Francis E. Godwyll and Siphokazi Magadla

13 Our Voice: Public Health and Youths' Communication for Social Change in Senegal 201
Laurel J. Felt and Alexandre Rideau

14 Painting a Picture of Creative Arts Therapy for War-Affected Youth in Northern Uganda 219
Julia R. Hanebrink and Alanya J. Smith

Conclusions: The Next Generation of African Children 235
Marisa O. Ensor

About the Contributors 249

Index 257

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

4.1	Behavior and event frequency by season	67
4.2	Percentage of time in location by sex	69
4.3	Total event and behavior frequency by sex	69
4.4	Comparison of BMI for age percentiles by birth order for females	72
13.1	Sunukaddu 2.0 participants complete that day's pretest beneath "competence clothesline" strung with new media literacy (NML) and social and emotional learning (SEL) placards	210

Tables

4.1	Index children	65
4.2	Average percentage of time by location	66
4.3	Behavior and event percentage of time by season	68
4.4	Percentage of time in behaviors by gender	70
13.1	Multivariate logistic regression results showing intervention effect on knowledge of a place, to be tested at baseline and two-year follow-up. Dakar, Senegal, March 2008–2010	207
13.2	Sunukaddu 1.0 and Sunukaddu 2.0 participants' average reported Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, pre- and postintervention	210

INTRODUCTION

AFRICAN CHILDHOODS: EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT, PEACEBUILDING, AND THE YOUNGEST CONTINENT

Marisa O. Ensor

Introduction

With 70% of its people under the age of 30, and approximately 147 million children under the age of five (UNICEF 2008, 49), Africa[1] is the world's youngest continent. Informed understandings of the implications of this so-called African "youth bulge" have been hampered by the shortage of detailed research on the issue. Inquiry into the lives and social circumstances of children and youth around the world has increased significantly in recent decades, spearheaded by the emergence of a "social science of childhood" in the 1980s and the widespread ratification of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This evolving focus of investigation on children issues, however, has been largely confined to the Global North. The limited corpus of reliable research on Africa's youngest citizens has tended to adopt a negative outlook. Given Africa's turbulent realities, this pessimistic viewpoint is not entirely unwarranted, but, as the chapters in this book illustrate, it fails to acknowledge encouraging current trends toward brighter possibilities.

Chief among Africa's many challenges is the low rate of child survival. Although sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a remarkable 14% reduction of the under-five mortality rate since 1990, it "remains the most difficult place in the world for a child to survive until age five" (UNICEF 2008, 4). In 2006, the latest year for which firm estimates are available, the under-five mortality rate for Africa south of the Sahara was 160 per 1,000 live births—in other words, approximately one in every six children died before reaching their fifth birthday. Many die soon after birth from AIDS contracted from their mother during pregnancy. Others are orphaned and left to fend for themselves or, in the absence

of responsible adults, become the heads of their households. Across the continent, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has created a crisis of unprecedented proportions affecting all, old and young (de Waal and Argenti 2002; see also Cheney, this volume). Additionally, Africa is the furthest behind on most of the child-related Millennium Development Goals, as I discuss in more detail in the Conclusion.

Older children also represent a sizeable demographic group in Africa; close to half the population ranges between the ages of 15 and 24. Under the Charter for the African Youth, this age group is categorized as "youth." Three in every five African youth are unemployed. Three quarters of them live below the U.S.dollar (USD) $1-a-day income poverty measure. Even those with access to schooling have to contend with a saturated job market, while jobs in agriculture, domestic work, and self-employment are often underpaid and unreflective of educational attainment. Economic disaffection impacts young people's capacity to see themselves as a critical force for a productive economy and a cohesive society and, in turn, fuels political disaffection and reduces their potential for active citizenship and democratic governance (State of the Union Africa 2010, 27). Accounts of marginal and impecunious youth, their lives marred by frustration and disillusionment over their limited prospects, have become common. Largely perceived as a potential force for social disruption, upheaval, and even terrorism, Africa's youth have been the focus of numerous new policies and programs that target their livelihoods, civic participation, and health. Rwanda has recently provided for two youth seats in its Chamber of Deputies, and national youth policies have been passed in Ghana (2007), Nigeria (2007), and Kenya (2008), promoting employment, social protection schemes and youth funds, and some progress has already been recorded (State of the Union Africa 2010, 27).

Some of the challenges and opportunities facing Africa's youngest citizens are not particular to them. All over the world, recent social studies of children and youth point to a growing concern about the ramifications of globalization, transnational migration and displacement, and general global social and economic restructuring for the lives and futures of young people (Coe et al. 2011; Ensor and Goździak 2010; Hart 2008). At the same time, issues of difference and diversity in Africa emerge from the richly multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual, and multireligious character of society. They also arise from differences in age, gender, socioeconomic background, (dis)ability, place of birth and/or residence, and, for the millions of young Africans displaced by wars and other humanitarian emergencies, their status as economic migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, or internally displaced persons.

In spite of this enormous diversity, youth in Africa have been uncritically characterized in overgeneralized and highly negative terms—"disenfranchised and disempowered," "discontented and disorderly." They were reduced to the status of an underclass and categorized as a "lost generation" in earlier accounts (Kaplan 1994; Cruise O'Brian 1996; Richards 1996; Abdullah et al. 1997). Some more recent exceptions notwithstanding (e.g., De Boeck and Honwana 2005; Christiansen et al. 2006), African youngsters have continued to be mainly construed as either vulnerable victims of the frequent humanitarian crises that plague their homelands, or as violent, militarized youth and "troubled" gang members.

The positive contributions of Africa's youngest generations to processes of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, survival, and participatory human development on their continent remain largely unexplored.

The Link between Education, Development, and Peacebuilding in Africa

Contemporary world realities in Africa and elsewhere demonstrate how the issues of education, development, and peacebuilding are interrelated, mutually constitutive, and pressingly relevant. The education system is a fundamental vehicle of socialization through which the dominant ideas, knowledge forms, social organization, norms, values, social practices, and societal relations are maintained and reproduced (Bernstein 1996; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Historically inclined education scholars remind us of the fundamental connections linking education and state and nation building in Africa. With political independence, African national governments gave substantial support to the establishment of national universities perceived as important symbols of statehood. State support for universities thus evolved with the emergence of the African nation-state. "National education was [therefore] a massive engine of integration, assimilating the local to the national and the particular to the general. In short,... education was pressed into service by the state as an essential vehicle of national development" (Green 1997, 134–35).

The link between education and development is not a new one. Education was incorporated in the development agenda during the 1950s and 1960s when development practitioners espousing modernization and human capital frameworks recognized a positive link between education and economic growth (Schultz 1971; Inkeles and Smith 1974). Often associated with enhanced human capital and material prosperity, education has become prominent in approaches to and critiques of development, and a variety of perspectives and frameworks are currently available. Among other benefits, education is assumed to promote competitiveness and productivity; reduce inequality, poverty and disease; mitigate conflict and crisis; and promote human capability and achieve social justice. Espousing a broader understanding of education's role in national development, the African/Africanist educational scholars Dei et al. (2006) have promoted a view that "education should not be about producing a labour force to serve the requirements of global capital. Instead, it ought to be about providing skills and knowledges to members of a community so that they are able to understand each other and their connections with wider communities" (Dei et al. 2006, 14).

As was the case with the connection between education and development, interrogations of education's relation to conflict have also become more common. Situations of political instability and violent conflict have been associated with the declining enrollment patterns observed in many development countries, including those in Africa, since at least since the 1980s (Berstecher and Carr-Hill 1990). The content and process of education may actually contribute to precipitating the outbreak and development of violent response through

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

unequal educational access and negative teaching (Nkurunziza 2010, 61). In particular, "an education system that reinforces social fissures can represent a dangerous source of conflict" (UNESCO IBE 2002; quoted in Rutayisire et al. 2004, 320). South Sudanese refugees, for instance, often highlight the imposition of Arabic-Islamic school curricula as a primary indicator of the repression and persecution to which they were subjected by the Khartoum government and a key driver motivating their exodus into exile (Ensor forthcoming). Education and schooling may have also contributed to the conflict in Rwanda. Aspects of schooling that are seen as having exacerbated divisions and contributed to violent conflict include discriminatory practices such as the use of ethnically defined pupil identification files, differential access to national examinations, violent forms of punishment, and biased content regarding civics and historical subjects (Rutayisire et al. 2004, 332; see also Godwyll and Magadla, this volume). A similar pattern has been identified for Liberia, where segregationist education policies reinforced Americo-Liberian hegemony at the expense of indigenous Liberians, leading the country to civil war (Godwyll and Magadla, this volume).

On the other hand, as Burundian President Pierre Nkurinziza has argued, education can also serve as a means of conflict resolution, thus contributing to peacebuilding. "Educational provision is a key peace dividend and can be an important incentive to disarm" (Nkurinziza 2010, 62). Improved educational provision can send a clearly discernible signal from the government that the state is committed to the well-being of its citizens. Moreover, improved education services and curricular content can serve as effective means of rectifying long-standing group inequalities and of delegitimizing violence as a tool of conflict resolution. Upgraded educational provision and teaching can contribute to the long-term peaceful management of relationships between groups in society, thereby reducing the risks of conflict erupting again in the future (ibid.). The critical importance of education in processes of postconflict reconstruction and reconciliation is recognized by affected communities themselves. In postwar Sierra Leone (Graybill and Lanegran 2004) and South Sudan (Ensor forthcoming), for instance, education for their children was reported as families' first priority, together with basic needs such as shelter and health care.

International attention has progressively shifted away from a negative concern with insufficient or unsustainable development or violent conflict solely as obstacles to ensuring access to basic education for all to a positive awareness of the creative roles that young pupils can play as agentive participants in these interrelated processes, not just passive recipients of others' provisions. The work of some of the contributors to this volume exemplifies this recent trend in the African context. Our focus, rather than being dictated a priori by academic demands or personal preferences, has been determined by the priorities of African children and youth themselves who, together with their adult counterparts, consistently list education, peace, and prosperity as their most hoped-for objectives for themselves, their families, and their communities. A brief overview of some of the most salient issues shaping these areas will help to contextualize and situate the chapters that follow.

Education in Africa

In the wake of the political independence of many African countries, "[there was] high optimism in the possibilities for promoting economic growth and development through national resources. During this period, education appeared to be the most promising domain for investment in the future" (Assie-Lumumba 2000, 89–90). In 1961, a UNESCO-organized conference of African States on the Development of Education was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The provision of universal, compulsory, and free education for a minimum of six years by 1980, and a 6% increase of the budget directed to improving the overall quality of the education system, were among the main recommendations arising from the conference (Deutschen Stiftung fuer Internationale Entwicklung 1976, 27; cited in Folson 2006, 137).

A decade later, it became evident that the large majority of African countries would not be able to fulfill the goals set in Addis Ababa. Furthermore, an overemphasis on national integration led postindependence and postcolonial education in Africa to deny heterogeneity in local populations, as difference was perceived in opposition to unity (Dei et al. 2006, 7). The heads of states came to a collective agreement that the overall results of their educational policies had fallen short of their initial expectations. A 1974 World Bank report suggested that formal education systems had failed to meet the needs of the countries in the Global South. Self-employment and prioritization of rural development were recommended as more viable alternatives. Nonformal and vocational education were to replace the academic curricula of schools as part of the structural-adjustment reforms of the World Bank for Africa (World Bank 1974). However, the argument for replacing formal education with vocational training failed to convince most African national education authorities. "[S]till holding on to the notion of education as a key to development, and desperate for solutions to the educational dilemma, educational planners and policy makers, strongly supported by government policy and backed with international financial assistance, concentrated their efforts on primary schools" (Folson 2006, 138).

Other approaches advocate a form of African-generated development that links local and global trends (Abagi 2005, 306) and prepares African children for full citizenship in the "global village."[2] In many African countries the challenge may not be limited to facilitating more schooling for their children; it also requires establishing incentive structures to justify the effort. Pushing families to make considerable investments as they struggle to provide an education for their children when suitable employment is unlikely to become available after graduation would only serve to further pauperizing the underprivileged (Folson 2006; see also Hoechner, this volume).

Relatedly, Dei et al. (2006, 11) argue that "[t]he current approach to schooling in Africa can be viewed as part of the problem rather than a solution to the continent's numerous problems." Affected by what they call the "marketization of education," class divisions in Africa may have actually intensified in societies where unaffordable schooling costs combine with a view of education as an indispensable tool for social mobility (ibid, 10). African policy makers indeed face

the challenge of finding an acceptable fit between education and commensurate jobs to sustain a justifiable faith in the positive correlation between education and development (Folson 2006, 147–48).

Children and Social Development in Africa

Postcolonial social policies in Africa and other less developed parts of the world have been premised on the assumption that there is an interdependence between education and social development. The idea that investment in human capital increases the knowledge base and productivity of a given society, which, in turn, accelerates social development, was popularized by Schultz in the 1960s. Schultz's work illustrated education's significant role in contributing to growth in national income by improving the skills and productive capabilities of the labor force. Although still relevant in understanding the dynamics of social development, critics of this approach have expressed concern with its mono-focal preoccupation with the material aspects of social development, and its neglect of the multiplicity of interacting variables that either accelerate or hinder social progress in very fundamental ways (Egbo 2005, 144–45; see also Willinski, this volume).

As Benedicta Egbo postulates with regard to African women, "[s]ince education is inextricably linked to development, the exclusion on one section of the population can only impede progress" (2005, 155). As Africa struggles at the margins of the world economy, its future development strategies can only benefit from prioritizing the education of all of its children. Unsuitable development policies, however, have often created an "overdependency on foreign handouts, loans, food, ideas, and expertise" and have resulted in a dependent and "assistencial state of mind and cultural climate" (Wossen-Taffesse 2006, 120–21). While some countries are clearly faring better than others, the literature has tended to homogenize the experiences of African states in terms of their development efforts, largely focusing on shortcomings and failures. Such broad-stroke attempts may produce a general picture of the common difficulties facing the continent, but they do not address the significant differences in local contexts and root causes that account for divergent outcomes.

While it has been noted that globalization and its associated dispersion of power call for further critical reflection on the role of children's rights as agents of development and catalysts for societal change, young people's own perspectives are not always considered. Lack of attention to children's realities is particularly evident in labor economics, which has shown little interest in the potential benefits of children's participation in the economic sphere, or the conditions under which children's work may advance their social and physiological development (Derby, Chapter 1, this volume). Constructions prevalent in the Global North of childhood as a time of education and play—that is, a time in which children are implicitly not deemed part of the workforce—are largely responsible for this situation (Boyden and Levison 2000).

The lack of specificity regarding children's experiences as workers and contributors to their households' livelihoods can have significant implications. A

focus on paid labor, for example, with little attention to intrahousehold dynamics, and can lead to inaccurate suppositions about children's own views, the actual work—remunerated or otherwise—they perform, and its consequences for the other dimensions of young people's lives. It is important to consider the possibility that children's work can be beneficial to their own development as well as to their households, or that household work can more severely impact educational attainment than work performed in the labor market (Levison 2000), pointing at gender, age, setting, and other differentials that negate the validity of blanket assumptions. Indeed, many school-aged girls and boys in Africa are expected to work and assume social responsibilities at an early age (Reynolds 1990; Colonna, this volume; Watkins, this volume). This serves both as a needed contribution to their households' survival and a positive form of socialization, and also creates multidimensional and multilayered relations of power and authority between children and adults. For older adolescents, successful participation in the economic arena may lead to their empowerment, and constitute a necessary condition for proper entry into moral adulthood.

Overall, development in Africa has remained a contested process in the postcolonial period and continues to be a pressing matter affecting the lives of the youngest members of the African family. African governments and members of the international community have voiced their commitment to improving children's realities in the continent. But such declarations alone will not succeed in bringing about sustainable positive change if they do not confront the structural and ideological barriers that militate against young people's full participation in the gerontocratic structures that dominate many African societies.

African Children, Conflict, and Peacebuilding

The centrality of children in Africa's social organization and economic and political development cannot be overestimated, even if the roles young people have played have at times been conflicted and contradictory. African societies emerging from postcolonial civil conflict have often viewed their children as the primary vehicles for the hope of a better future (Diouf 2003). Young people in Uganda, hailed as the "pillars of the nation" (Cheney 2007), represent the promise of restored national identity, and ideas of nationhood and childhood are seen as mutually constitutive. In South Sudan, children are described as "the reason for human existence." Among the Dinka, one of the major ethnic groups in this newly independent country,[3] children are seen as a manifestation of the power of God. Youngsters have been traditionally valued for their role in extending families and lineages, for the future material benefits they are expected to provide their households, and for their contributions to preserving time-honored ways of life and valued cultural identities (Madut Jok 2005, 149–50). During times of conflict, however, child protection concerns in these two countries, as in many others in the continent, have encompassed both the imperative to protect the young and the need to protect civilians from militarized youth. Children's and youths' role in both conflict and peacebuilding, from powerless targets of violence to empowered citizens resisting victimization

and the conditions that lead to confrontation, has been quite diverse and always significant.

Following the principle of the "evolving capacities of the child" enshrined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, there is a tendency to ascribe more agentive capacity to those categorized as youths than to those defined as children. Furthermore, when children are classified as youths, there is a tendency to shift the conceptualization from victims of conflict to potential agents of violence. "Youth combatants, for example, navigate no simple path of modernity in their contestation of gerontocratic powers" (Christiansen et al. 2006, 21), as is the case with many survivors of conflict in Sierra Leone (Lahai this volume), Eritrea (Hepner, this volume), South Sudan (Epstein, this volume), Rwanda and Liberia (Godwyll and Magadla, this volume), Uganda, (Hanebrink and Smith, this volume), and elsewhere in Africa.

These conflicts, and the protracted socioeconomic downturns that frequently heralded and always followed them, often affected children worst. Even in countries where the changes have been positive, as in the toppling of a dictator and the move toward participatory democracy, the substantive and material impacts of dramatic change on young people has been considerable.

> Yet these epochs of dramatic socio-political change hold the possible seeds of liberation and the (re)affirmation of human rights broadly and children's rights more specifically. Africa, as with many other parts of the world, grapples with issues of national sovereignty and localized cultures in relation to universal human and child rights protocols and instruments. These momentous changes and states of flux in Africa mean that African scholars and practitioners . . . have to deal with these issues in very decided ways. Africa is pregnant with possibilities waiting to be born as some of [its] countries re-shape their destinies and re-write their histories. (Sewpaul and Matthias 2011)

Conflict and peacebuilding in Africa are complicated phenomena that cannot be fully understood without interrogating the historical, structural, and cultural factors within African countries and the global economic and political systems in which they are enmeshed. As the previous discussion has illustrated, now more than ever, Africa's prosperity hinges on how well her 54 countries educate and train their children and thus their women and men. At the same time, the dynamic link between education, development, and peacebuilding is increasingly acknowledged, but not sufficiently understood. The discussion presented in the chapters that follow is an assessment of that dynamic relationship.

Rationale and Organization of this Book

From its inception, the rationale for producing this book has been to offer an evidence-based corrective to the unduly bleak and one-sided picture of African children's realties that too often pervades Western assumptions about life in the Global South in general, and especially in Africa. Paraphrasing Hobbes (1651), African children are often said to face a short, difficult, and brutish existence. Press coverage often stereotypes the sub-Saharan region as a repository of collapse

and death. In news reports of civil conflict, pandemics and famine, African children are too often depicted exclusively in negative terms—orphaned and abandoned, crushed by endemic calamity and hardship, brutalized by warlords, or themselves becoming dangerous members of rebel militias. As the chapters that follow illustrate, the ethnographic record does not support this narrow perspective. Moreover, Western views of children as helpless victims contrast sharply with the African doxa that has traditionally portrayed young people as strong and resilient, surviving and thriving even under difficult conditions (Gibbs 1994; Honwana 1998; Reynolds 1996). Anchoring our work on this approach, we seek to illuminate the lives of African children by offering a more balanced understanding of childhood that draws on a broader analytical view and deeper appreciation of children's position in African society.

More specifically, this book presents an up-to-date analysis of the multiple roles that Africa's youngest generations play in the processes they themselves identify as most directly affecting their lives—schooling and education, survival and development, conflict and peacebuilding—from the perspective of the young people themselves. A common thread that unifies the various contributions is the understanding that conceptualizations of childhood and the roles performed by young people in Africa, as elsewhere, vary not only according to age but also gender, ethnicity, religion, class, geography, and particular circumstances, and need to be examined at the intersection of local, regional, and global forces.

Our work also serves as a comparative lens highlighting the points of convergence and divergence among various African settings. The majority of the chapters in this book are based on ethnographic research across the African continent with chapters focusing on the situation of children in particular countries—Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda—and at the same time discussing issues of pan-African relevance. The volume draws on the work of 20 scholars and practitioners representing the fields of cultural and applied anthropology, human rights, international development, education, peace and conflict studies, childhood studies, humanitarian assistance, and public health. While empirically grounded in the realities of specific geographical settings, the lessons offered by the various chapters speak to conditions in other African societies and, by qualified extension, the rest of the developing world.

Overall, this book seeks to illuminate the range of children and youth responses to the tumultuous realities facing contemporary Africa, inviting deeper reflection and a reconsideration of young people's resilience and agency. The chapters that follow explore the unique ways in which children and youth in Africa confront the extraordinary challenges that frame their everyday lives, and manage to survive and thrive in the midst of dramatic global sociopolitical and economic changes. While acknowledging the profound challenges associated with growing up in an environment of uncertainty and deprivation, *African Childhoods* sheds light on African children's often constructive engagement with a variety of societal conditions, adverse or otherwise, and their ability to positively influence their own lives and those of others.

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com