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DIVIDED AT THE MARGINS

A STUDY OF YOUNG SOUTHERN SUDANESE REFUGEE MEN IN CAIRO, EGYPT

NATALIE I. FORCIER

November 2009

Center for Migration & Refugee Studies

American University in Cairo

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This paper is dedicated to the memory of Jeshua Stephen, who spent countless hours with me reviewing field notes and drafts. It is my humble aspiration that in some way the findings contained herein can influence policy and generate programs that will prevent future unnecessary deaths of young men who find themselves at odds with their brothers.

Natalie Forcier
April 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details a selection of findings on the situation of Southern Sudanese refugee youth at-risk for engaging in violence. Acknowledging that youth violence is not the problem but rather the symptom of underlying social and economic problems, the primary aim of this work was to explore the root causes for young Sudanese men to engage in violence.

Ethnographic data was collected through participant observation from 4 June 2008 to 17 December 2008. Using a series of community entry points, participant observation took place in public or semi-public settings with young men, adult men, young women, and the sisters, mothers and other female relatives of the young men. Between February 2008 and December 2008, *ad hoc* interviews and discussions were conducted with a total of 158 young men and 32 young women consisting of approximately 1,500 hours of participant observation and interviews.

Based on participant observation and in-depth interviews, the research yielded the following findings:

- Sudanese youth are marginalized by the adult community.
- Sudanese youth self-marginalize.
- Young Sudanese men have lost hope for the future.
- “Gangs” are created to serve as social support networks, not promote violence.
- Sudanese youth have accepted violence as an unavoidable part of their lives.

This report is structured around these findings and the conclusions and recommendations that can be drawn from them.

Youth are the core of every community, regardless of displacement or location. There is not a single human right that can be guaranteed without investment in young people, for they hold the power to be a transformative asset for peace and development, or the greatest burden a community can face. Young men are traditionally viewed as physically strong, capable, hard-working providers who are considered anything *but* vulnerable. However, if we analyze the power structures required to answer the poignant question “[v]ulnerable to what?” (Clark 2007: 293), we see that not only have these young Sudanese refugee men been denied access to services and traditional support networks, whether through institutional structures, stigma or self-marginalization, but inability to obtain education and the skills necessary to secure employment and successfully transition to adulthood.

Young Southern Sudanese refugee men in Cairo, Egypt find themselves at the margins of every possible definition of society – both within their host country and their own community. At these margins, young men have divided themselves on seemingly arbitrary lines without regards to race, tribe, religion, or historical conflict. In this struggle for respect, masculinity, and identity they have found support in informal networks – incorrectly identified as “gangs” – which due to an unfortunate series of events has led to a violent rivalry among former friends and blood relatives.

Violence is not the problem, but rather the symptom of other underlying problems. This research shows that marginalization, lack of opportunity, loss of hope for the future, and a normalization of

violence have caused youth to turn against each other and resort to violence. While many have referred this problem as a phenomenon – a situation for which the cause is unclear – I argue that given the historical context and lack of opportunity presented to these young men, the cause for their desire to own weapons, engage in violence, and obtain masculinity by asserting power over their equals is the direct result of the structural violence and marginalization to which they have become accustomed.

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I: BACKGROUND

As of January 2009, there were 10,148 registered Sudanese “persons of concern” with the UNHCR Cairo office, with 51% of those registered being women and children (UNHCR 2009); however, the size of the Sudanese population in Cairo is estimated to be much larger when including those who have never approached the UNHCR office and those with closed files. This population includes young Sudanese men who are excluded from the traditional support networks available to the Sudanese community due to their style of dress, age and location, and ongoing violence among youth in the refugee community. Rejection from these traditional networks is significant as these structures are a primary source of agency and identity (Rowe 2007: 30). In addition to the hardships faced by all refugees living in Cairo, these unique barriers challenge the values of respect, masculinity, and honor. They deny youth opportunities otherwise available to other refugees.

Deprived of sources of social legitimacy, young Sudanese men changed their masculine ideals to promote an alternative identity they deemed to be legitimate (see Lewis 2007: 7; Whitehead and Barrett 2001: 20). Their activities are based on the rejection of poverty through a physical manifestation of hip-hop culture (style of dress, external mannerisms)¹ and membership in informal social support networks (incorrectly referred to as “gangs”). In addition, a smaller sub-set of these individuals often engage in violent and criminal activity, including violence between two rival groups of youth. With few notable exceptions (Lewis 2007; Rowe 2007; Rothing 2006), little is known about the nature and significance of the alternative sources of masculinity, voice and agency these young refugee men pursue during their displacement, or the underlying social and economic causes of violence and crime in this community.

In 2005 between 1,800 and 2,500 Sudanese refugees staged a three-month protest near UNHCR in Cairo to bring attention to the violation of Sudanese refugee rights in Egypt (Azzam et al. 2006: 5). This attempt to assert personal and collective agency, particularly among young Sudanese men (Rowe 2007: 2), failed to achieve its purpose and instead ended with several deaths² and the imprisonment of more than 2,000 individuals (Azzam et al. 2006: 40). One month after the end of the protest, in January 2006, violence among Southern Sudanese refugee youth escalated to unprecedented levels (Rothing 2006: 4). In June 2007, the groups clashed outside of the World Refugee Day Celebration at the American University in Cairo, killing one young man - Maliah Bekam (Jureidini 2007).

As of December 2008, there are two main groups operating in Cairo, each with two respective territories of operation. How the territories aligned this way is unclear, although data indicates that there are strong familial ties between the areas paired for Group A. In addition, a large majority of Sudanese men in one of the territories belonging to Group A attend church in the allied territory.

¹ Tyson (2003) describes the physical manifestation of the hip-hop culture as including “a specific clothing style (e.g. baggy), language (e.g. new/hip/cool) and attitude (e.g. confident, progressive, confrontational)” (3). The greatest indicator in this setting for those who have adopted a hip-hop identity is by far the style of dress.

² The official list of deaths acknowledged by UNHCR put the total count at 28, 11 of whom were under the age of 12 (Azzam et. Al. 2006: 40). Other sources have reported as many as 156 deaths (EOHR 2006). The discrepancy may be able to be attributed to the large number of protest participants who were closed file refugees and therefore not “individuals of concern” to UNHCR.

Similarly, the majority of Sudanese in the territories of Group B belong to the same religious congregation.

Despite the territorial alliances, both groups frequently have rifts with their partner territories, generally spurned by instances of violence or crime between group members. Although taken very seriously, group leadership is quick to intervene and quell disputes in order to ensure cohesiveness of the groups.

Even though neither group formally sanctions inter-group violence, the group identity does play a role in perpetuating the violence. The territorial affiliation of the groups dictates where lines are physically drawn and determines who can be the offender and the offended. Lewis (2007) notes “violence between youth groups in Cairo has thus far been a defining characteristic of gang life” (12), which is perhaps best demonstrated by the “initiation” procedures for new members of the group; a “ritual” that consists of simply denouncing the rival group and requesting membership in the presence of current members.

This research builds upon the previous work of Rothing (2006) that examines the reasons behind the formation of the youth “gangs” and the underlying and contingent factors causing violence among young Sudanese men in Cairo. However, since 2006, several of these factors have changed substantially, as have individual members of the groups.³ Therefore, many of the findings contained here differ substantially from the Rothing study. In addition, the methodology of this research differs substantially, offering a much more in-depth ethnographic view of the lives and circumstances facing these young men.

This report represents a selection of the findings of the overall research that were suitable for publication at this time and in this venue. Section II details the methodology of the research including definitions, sampling, and the weaknesses of the ethnographic approach employed. Section III details a selection of the findings and Section IV concludes and makes recommendations for policy and programs.

³ Interviews with research assistants who worked on the “Inner-City Wannabees” project in 2006 with Jacob Rothing indicate that a majority of the individuals interviewed as part of that project are no longer members of the groups. Since 2006, many members have repatriated or been deported to Sudan, fled to Israel, or have been imprisoned; many of these migrations occurred after the murder outside of World Refugee Day in 2007. These have been replaced with new members, but since 2006 the size of the groups has decreased overall. Interviews indicate that the total number of members of both groups combined is 250.

II: DEFINITIONS, METHODOLOGY & FRAMEWORK

DEFINITIONS

This research focused specifically on young Southern Sudanese refugee men who were deemed to be “vulnerable” or at-risk for engaging in “gang” violence. This section will define the numerous adjectives expressed in attempting to categorize this population.

The original parameters of the research focused on “youth,” the definition of which varies from context to context. For the purposes of this report, I have employed the widest definition of youth that is culturally contextualized as those who are either unmarried and/or under the age of 29. In total, interviewees and participants ranged from 10 to 29 years old.

For the purpose of this report, refugees include those who currently hold UNHCR asylum seeker or refugee status cards, as well as those who are closed files or have not approached UNHCR but self-identify as refugees.

The subjects of this research were males who either were born in the area currently referred to as Southern Sudan (including the three contested states of South Kordofan, Abyei, and Upper Nile) or had ethnic origins in these areas but may have spent all or a majority of their lives in Northern Sudan. Throughout this report youth are referred to as Sudanese or specifically Southern Sudanese; the usage of either phrase is not intended to be political in any way.

Definitions of vulnerability vary in different countries and different contexts. Refugees under the age of 18 (which comprise a large cohort within this study) have been described as “the most vulnerable of a vulnerable population” (McNamara 1998:2), from a policy standpoint this vulnerability ceases to exist once young men reach the age of 18, giving way to unaccompanied minors, female-headed households, and the elderly, chronically ill and disabled (UNHCR 1999: 95). Because of this age distinction, these young men transition from being in one of the most vulnerable groups (unaccompanied minors) to being one of the least vulnerable groups – single, unmarried men – literally, overnight. The problematic nature of essentialist dialogue surrounding concepts of vulnerability has been discussed elsewhere (Clark 2007, Asad 2004), emphasizing that the key problem is the abstraction of a concept that is then universally applied. As Clark notes, “‘vulnerables’ inherently embody fixed traits of physical weakness, economic dependence and psychosocial trauma...[on the contrary, refugees] are vulnerable to particular problems in specific contexts and relationships” (Clark 2007: 287). For the purpose of this study, “vulnerable” young men were those who self-identified being denied access to services and/or traditional support networks, whether through institutional structures, stigma, or self-marginalization.

As will be discussed in Section III, there are no clear rites of passage for members to join either group. As a result, the broadest definition possible is used in this research for “youth at-risk for engaging in ‘gang’ violence”, which includes young men who self-identify as members but do not, and have never, participated in violence or crime as well as those individuals identify as part of the group exclusively to benefit from the positive benefits offered.

For a variety of reasons, the two “gangs” are not named throughout the report, and are only referred to as Group A and Group B.

Because Group A and Group B do not always self-identify as “gangs” and because of the charged nature of the word “gang” this report refrains from referring to either group as such. The use of this term as being more so the result of moral panic rather than properly identified organized collective illegal activity has been discussed at length elsewhere (see Sullivan 2005, Welch, et. al 2002). As will be explained in the following sections, these groups are viewed as informal social support structures that have formed among Sudanese refugee youth and not as “gangs,” as the groups have not self-identified this as their primary purpose, a majority of the members do not own weapons, and the majority has never engaged in violence or crime.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research changed throughout the course of its execution. With youth at-risk for engaging in ‘gang’ violence (hereinafter “at-risk youth”), ethnographic data was collected through participant observation for each group from 4 June 2008 to 17 December 2008.⁴ Using a series of community entry points, participant observation took place in public or semi-public settings.⁵ While spending time in these places conversations took place with a variety of people, including young men involved in the groups, young men not affiliated with either group, men who had left either group but were friends with current members, adult men, young women, and the sisters, mothers and other female relatives of the young men. The conversations that took place during these “hanging out” sessions centered on the topics related to the research questions (see Rodgers 2004).

From 1 October 2008 until 17 December 2008, the intensity of the participation observation increased; data was collected through participant observation in the aforementioned settings as well as in my personal residence. From 1 October 2008 until 17 December 2008, I maintained two residences in areas frequented by at-risk youth; one in Ain Shams and one in Hadayek el Maadi, with time split equally between the two locations. During this time, 12 young men (3 in Hadeyek el Maadi, 9 in Ain Shams) visited my home daily while I was present for *ad hoc* conversations that gradually consisted of detailed life histories. Of these 12 individuals, six constituted group leadership. In other contexts, this type of participant observation yielding narratives has proven to be the most accurate way to gather data on youth gangs and social networks generally (Fleisher 2005).

Between February 2008 and December 2008, *ad hoc* interviews and discussions were conducted with a total of 158 young men and 32 young women consisting of approximately 1,500 hours of participant observation and interviews. Overall, information was gathered from 115 members of Group A and 42 members of Group B. Given the drastic size difference between the two groups the

⁴ Intermittent follow-up interviews and fieldwork were conducted between January 2009 and October 2009. This information is discussed exclusively in the epilogue, as this work should represent a “snapshot” of the violence problem between June and December 2008.

⁵ These locations included streets and public spaces, community-based organization sponsored events, coffee shops, restaurants, police stations, individual’s homes, church services, formal group meetings (organized by the Group A), four trips to Alexandria (three organized by Group A and one organized by Group B), five Nile cruises (three sponsored by Group A and two organized by Group A), and two parties in hotel ballrooms (one organized by each group).

samples taken constituted approximately 42% and 49% of the overall group membership (Group A and Group B respectively).

FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING YOUTH VIOLENCE

Acknowledging that youth violence is not the problem but rather the symptom of underlying social and economic problems (Moser 2004), the primary aim of this work was to explore the root causes for young Sudanese men to engage in violence. Initially the research questions focused on linkages between masculinity, respect, verbal expression facility and its relationship to violence. However, throughout the course of the research other themes emerged, such as those of social marginalization, self-marginalization, the importance of the group identity (including the positive benefits and implications of membership) and other outside factors contributing to violence such as the media and community gossip. This report encompasses all of these themes in order to paint a more complete picture of the underpinnings of the violence occurring among Sudanese youth in Cairo.

The type of violence and crime in which Sudanese youth are engaging fall under what Moser (2004) has categorized as “economic/social” violence, which is comprised of “territorial or identity-based ‘turf’ violence; robbery, theft” (5). Moser (2004) also notes, as others have (Hume 2004, Pickup, et. al. 2001, Greig 2000) that this type of violence, particularly the social aspects of it, are frequently linked to both “gendered power relations and constructions of masculinities” (4). However, Moser’s categorizations of violence are more fluid than static, and thus although youth and gang violence falls squarely within the “economic/social” category, the situation of Sudanese youth in Cairo also draws upon aspects of political violence and the concept of structural violence, which asserts that “violence [can be] built into the structure [of society,]...show[ing] up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances” (Galtung 1969: 171).

It is important to view the violence and criminal activities in which members these young men engage within a larger structure of underlying causes, which relate primarily to the concepts of structure, identity and agency (Moser and McIlwaine 2004). Moser (2004) explains:

Since issues of power and powerlessness are fundamental to understanding the causal factors that underpin violence, this allows for the analysis of the wider political and socioeconomic power structure within which individual realities manifest. This framework also recognizes that experiences of violence depend on such elements of individual identity formation as gender, age, ethnicity and race. Finally, identity is closely interrelated with individual “human agency”, a concept which recognizes individuals as social actors who face alternative ways of formulating their objectives, however restricted their resources. (Moser, 2004: 8)

Using this framework to examine issues of youth violence, Section III details a selection of the findings of this research.

III: FINDINGS

Many standard demographic indicators such as tribe and ethnicity were not obtained during the course of this research, as Sudanese youth have dropped these identity markers in lieu of new ones. These conclusions are based on the 158 individuals who were interviewed, the majority of which who do not participate in violence or crime.

The majority of group members have ethnic origins in South Sudan, although most spent a significant part of their life in Khartoum, corresponding with the mass internal rural-to-urban migration in the late 1980s (see IOM 2006). Among both groups, 8 individuals identified as being Egyptian, with ethnic origins in the Nubian/Aswan regions of southern Egypt and 1 individual identified as being from Saudi Arabia. A large majority was Christian, the most common denomination being Roman Catholic, although Lutheran and Seventh Day Adventists were also represented. A minority was Muslim, or from mixed religious families.⁶

Family composition varied depending on location. With only three known exceptions, none of the young men in Ain Shams lived with immediate or extended family members, but opted instead to live with groups of friends. Conversely, there were no cases observed in Hay el Ashr where young men were *not* living with immediate or extended family members, perhaps due to their age, as will be discussed in the tables below. In the areas of Hadeyek el Maadi and Abbasiyya, the population was mixed between those living with extended family members and those living with close friends.

Among those who were not living with immediate or extended family members, this was most often caused by living family members (spouses, children, parents, etc.) being resettled to a third country in the West (Australia, the United States, Canada, Europe) or having migrated illegally to Israel. A few also had spouses and/or children who had returned to Sudan or had never migrated with them. The reasons as to why these young men were not resettled with their family members vary greatly; however, the most commonly cited reasons included late arrival to Egypt (coming and joining family members later and therefore not being on the same UNHCR card/case for resettlement) or not being able to establish clear paternity in cases where mothers were deceased or in Sudan and the father was the primary candidate for resettlement. Of those with relatives and family members in Sudan, most indicated that those individuals were living in Khartoum and surrounding areas.

Age demographics were obtained, and as the following tables indicate, varied greatly between the two groups. Age distribution among Group A differed greatly between the two territories and are therefore described in two separate tables.⁷ Members of Group B were more homogenous despite differences in location and are therefore represented in one table.

⁶ It is important to note that the minorities were evenly distributed between both groups; neither showed a significantly larger concentration of an ethnic group or tribe, location of origin in Sudan, or religion. Demographically, the groups are comparable and membership is determined based on the individual's geographical location in Cairo.

⁷ The only individuals interviewed who were excluded from these demographics were the 4 young men who self-identified as members of Group A but lived in the territory of Group B.

Table 1: Age Distribution among Members of Group A (Location 1)

Age	Number	Percentage (n=63)
18 or less	5	8%
19 – 22	25	40%
23 – 26	36	58%
27 +	2	3%

Table 2: Age Distribution among Members of the Group A (Location 2)

Age	Number	Percentage (n=48)
18 or less	30	63%
19 – 22	13	27%
23 – 26	5	10%
27+	1	2%

Table 3: Age Distribution among Members of Group B (Both Locations)

Age	Number	Percentage (n=43)
18 or less	2	5%
19 – 22	22	51%
23 – 26	6	14%
27+	13	30%

Although included in this sample as members because of they have self-identified as such, the membership status those who are under the age of 18 in Group A is disputed. While they are invited to social events, older group members and leadership are quick to lecture them on why they are not, and should not, be members of the group because they are too young. Although some do engage in acts of violence and crime as individuals, such acts are also condoned by older group members who have explained that they are *“not like us – they have to take care for their future.”*

SUDANESE YOUTH ARE MARGINALIZED BY THE ADULT COMMUNITY.

Young Sudanese men, regardless of their location within Cairo or involvement violence suffer equally from several levels of marginalization from the Sudanese community. Although those young men who engage in violent or criminal activities constitute a minority of the population overall, their actions have shaped the entire public street culture among Sudanese in the areas of Ain Shams, Hay el Ashr, Abbasiyya and Hadeyek el Maadi. Those who are not involved in violent activities (and even those who do engage in violence) are confined to their home areas of Cairo out of fear of attacks from the groups in other areas. Because the existence of this violent minority has shaped the dynamic of public life for all young Sudanese men, this group suffers from universal marginalization from the Sudanese community.

The relationship between Sudanese youth and community-based organizations varied depending on locations; the relationship in Ain Shams was far more hostile than in Hadeyek el-Maadi, but overall was still strained.⁸ The following section divides observations between these two areas because of these differences.

Meetings with directors of community-based organizations in Ain Shams⁹ indicated a general disdain by the Sudanese community in this area for those youth who had adopted a hip-hop identity, assuming those who dressed in a certain manner undoubtedly engaged in violent activity. One CBO director went so far as to say, *"The way you dress and look is a reflection of the quality of your character. You've seen them. They can't learn. They're hopeless. They're rubbish."* Opinions regarding the general hopelessness for Sudanese youth were expressed directly to me as well as to the youth themselves who had accompanied me to the meetings on two occasions. These attitudes towards young people have been observed in similar contexts. Dolan (2003) gathered adults to discuss traits typical of youth in the northern Ugandan culture, a situation also marked by a lack of opportunity and access to social services. The findings he shares are identical to many of the traits expressed by community-based organizations during the course of this research.

Workshop participants noted that 'Unmarried young people are perceived as UNABLE to participate in political life' and that whereas 'all adults are responsible (because they have children and houses and run homes)', youth are stereotyped as 'irresponsible, disrespectful, impatient, extravagant, arrogant, fun lovers who are ineffective at work' and who 'like leisure at the expense of work'. (Dolan, 2003: 5)

Only one organization in Ain Shams expressed a desire to work with Sudanese youth, whereas others had instituted policies of turning away Sudanese youth at registration if they dressed in a "certain manner," implying those who had adopted a hip-hop identity.

Observation of areas of Ain Shams with a large Sudanese population during evening hours culturally characterized by the association of men in public areas (8pm – 1am), showed great distinction between the young adult and adult Sudanese populations.¹⁰ Adult men gathered in large numbers in coffee and *shisha* cafes watching television and playing backgammon whereas Sudanese youth congregated exclusively on street corners in small groups of four or five.

Community-based associations interviewed in the Hadeyek el Maadi area were far more receptive to working with Sudanese youth. All three of the community-based associations identified had active programs targeting youth. Two organizations had programs specifically promoting hip-hop groups in the area, assisting them in creating and promoting their music.

In Hadeyek el Maadi, a coffee shop on the main street of Hassanien Dosuki is reliably packed with members of the Sudanese community every evening. While Sudanese youth still congregate in small groups on street corners in passing, they also frequent the coffee shop mingling with their adult counterparts. Even among the tables one can observe an adult man in a traditional Southern

⁸ Interviews with community-based organizations were not conducted in Hay el Ashr or Abbasiyya.

⁹ This data is based on the community-based organizations identified by the youth is perhaps in itself significant since it implies the scope and reach of such programs to the youth in the area.

¹⁰ It is important to note that after a center was established for Sudanese youth in Ain Shams in October 2008 offering English classes and other recreational activities as part of this research, youth stopped congregating on streets and began meeting either in the center or at a nearby coffee shop. This process of environmental modification is a proven method in reducing youth violence.

Sudanese shirt with bright patterns and embroidery smoking *shisha* and talking with a young man wearing a Sean John shirt, fake silver chains, baggy jeans and a do-rag.¹¹

Differences and disagreements on culture and identity between different generations is not a situation unique to the Sudanese in Cairo. Sudanese refugee youth and Sudanese refugee adults comprise radically different "vintages," or shared pre-flight and in-flight experiences. Vintages are considered to be "associative cohorts," allowing individuals with shared vintages to bond together in displacement (Kunz 1973: 138). While many of the Sudanese adult refugees may have somewhat similar vintages, they are radically different from the vintages of the Sudanese refugee youth, a majority of whom migrated to Egypt with their parents, and not of their own volition. The lack of autonomy in the decision to migrate and the experience of attempting transition to adulthood in displacement is radically different from the experience of the older generation, which adds difficulty to shared understandings of the experience of displacement between generations, a phenomenon experienced in many contexts (see Valentine Daniel 1997).

SUDANESE YOUTH SELF-MARGINALIZE.

Self-marginalization by young Sudanese men was also exhibited in a variety of ways. Reluctance to participate in programs because of the feeling that they may "taint" the sincere nature of community-based organizations, a feeling reciprocated by the directors of such organizations, has caused limited involvement of youth in programs for the community at large. When asked why one young man stopped attending youth-targeted English classes, he explained, *"I stopped going to the English classes because it [the center] is a good thing and I am a bad thing."*

While attending meetings with community-based organizations, youth resisted engaging in discussion even when asked direct questions. More passive self-marginalization was also exhibited, such as reluctance to enter rooms where meetings would be held and after entering refusing without coaxing to sit at tables or within the circle of those in the discussion.

This self-marginalization extended to larger NGOs as well. While discussing options for medical treatment, the following conversation took place:

Natalie: [in a joking voice] Go [to Caritas, the UNHCR implementing partner for medical services]! At least see what they have to say!

Young man: [sighs] They won't talk to me. They won't help. [nervously picking at the paint of the car he is leaning against] No.

Natalie: If you've never been there, how do you know they won't help you?

Young man: [stands up from leaning on the car and looks up to maintain eye contact] Because they don't help people like *me*. [points at chest] Even if I wear clothes '*adee* (normal) – [pulls at shirt] you know – they don't help people that are not good. And they'll know.

Natalie: Know what?

Young man: [leans back against the car and looks down at the ground].

The purpose of this section is not to assign blame on any single group, organization, or policy that has excluded Sudanese youth, but rather to demonstrate that currently young Sudanese men find

¹¹ A do-rag is a piece of polyester cloth tied tightly around the top of the head and allowed to fall around the nape of the neck. Although popularized by African-American hip-hop artists, the do-rag has its original roots in the countries of Africa and the Caribbean.

themselves completely isolated from support networks to which their adult counterparts have access. Contrary to the assertion of Rothling (2006) that Sudanese youth are not “multiply marginalized” (4), this section and its predecessor demonstrate that because of the cause and effect of the formation of the Groups and the ongoing violence among Sudanese youth, these young men are marginalized from their own Sudanese community and due to policies and exclusionary policies are denied access to structured activities and other services. Furthermore, all of these levels of marginalization are reinforced by a substantial level of self-marginalization.

YOUNG SUDANESE MEN HAVE LOST HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

Very few opportunities to build a life or a future exist for refugees in Cairo; young Sudanese men are no exception. However, there are also a series of unique barriers faced by this group causing them to have less access to services and traditional community support networks than other refugees. This situational analysis demonstrates that there are three factors which limit access to programming and traditional support networks for young Sudanese men: age, the decreasing size of the Sudanese community, and marginalization resulting from violent and criminal activity. The first factor began around 2001, when the average age of these young men began to reach their late teens and early 20s and they “grew out” of programming in a system where funding is prioritized for women and children. Since the changes in UNHCR policy, ending individual refugee status determination for Sudanese, and the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement formally ending the war between the Khartoum government and SPLA, there has been a relatively large-scale repatriation of the South Sudanese community in Cairo that has limited the number of services available to all Sudanese refugees, including youth. The third factor, marginalization from the Sudanese community, has only emerged in the last two years once violence and criminal activity among Sudanese youth began to escalate.

Every young man interviewed expressed a desire for educational and/or skill building programs in addition to sports activities and trips similar to those available to them when they were younger. Particularly in the case of sports activities and trips, the groups have been able to gather money and organize such programs on their own, although they are not as regular as desired.

The policies of host countries are perhaps one of the most influential factors on the new refugee “identity” (Benard 1986: 618), and can be the largest determining factor in the formation of “associative cohorts.” Despite signing the 1951 Refugee Convention and the OAU Refugee Convention, it has been asserted that the Egyptian government outright “opposes any suggestion of integrating refugees” (Shafie 2005:9). This is best evidenced by the lack of right to work and education for refugees in Cairo. Although Sudanese are granted some preferential treatment over other refugees, the situation still does not meet “the requirements of ‘local integration’ as identified by UNHCR” (Grabska 2005: 72). An overwhelming majority of the young men who are currently members of the Groups fall between the ages of 19 and 23, and have migrated to Cairo between 2002-2003, and therefore were between the ages of 13 and 17 during flight. Restricted access to educational opportunities severely limited their ability to continue their education and have limited livelihood opportunities as they approach adulthood. Their adult counterparts however, who in flight only suffered the restrictions on employment, have thus experienced a different, and arguably less compounded, aspect of the flight experience in Egypt.

Lack of access to educational and work opportunities is perhaps one of the most devastating influencing factors, since it causes individuals to lose hope for their own personal future. Once

again, this is not a situation unique to refugee youth, as restrictive state policies on education and employment affect all refugees equally. However, refugee adults have access to traditional support networks, whereas youth have less access to such resources, further justifying the creation of informal support networks (the “gangs”). There is also a strong link between the propensity to engage in violent acts and a lack of hope for the future, as many young men expressed that they saw little qualitative difference between spending their lives on the streets of Cairo, in an Egyptian prison, or back in Sudan; regardless of the track, they felt that in the end their lives would never amount to anything substantive.

Anderson (2000) describes the underlying causes for inner-city youth to assert themselves in a violent manner; a situation that is strikingly similar to that of Sudanese refugee youth:

The inclination to violence springs from the circumstances of life among the ghetto poor – the lack of jobs that pay a living wage, limited basic public services (police response in emergencies, building maintenance, trash pickup, lighting, and other services that middle-class neighborhoods take for granted), the stigma of race, the fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking, and the resulting alienation and absence of hope for the future. Simply living in such an environment places young people at special risk of falling victim to aggressive behavior” (32).

Similarly, within the refugee context, Crisp (2003) notes that when young refugee males have little prospect for financial independence and livelihood opportunities they “are particularly prone to engage in negative coping mechanisms, including various forms of delinquent or anti-social behavior” (16-17).

A large number of the young men have parents, siblings or spouses who had been resettled to the West, but only a few were aware of and waiting to begin the family reunification process, which varies greatly from country to country. One young man shared, *“They’ve all been resettled. They have a life. They have a future. But me [pauses and maintains eye contact with a forced smile] -- I’m just here.”* In the mean time however, as young men the numbers of programs and assistance available to them is limited. Funding priorities are generally assigned to women, children, and families. For example, Caritas/UNHCR assistance for unaccompanied minors stops at age 18 and unmarried men are ineligible for financial assistance (Azzam et. al. 2006: 12-17). Even of the young men who were married and had children had stopped receiving assistance from Caritas/UNHCR for unexplained reasons.

“GANGS” ARE CREATED TO SERVE AS SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS, NOT TO PROMOTE VIOLENCE.

Formation of *ad hoc* authority structures in displacement is common. Benard (1986) explains that authority structures are commonly transformed in one of three ways: “old authority structures may be revitalized; existing authority patterns may be reinforced; or establish authority may be undermined. All three developments contain the potential for significant conflict” (631). In the case of the formation of the “gangs,” the third option described by Benard has occurred. He continues to write, “[i]n a refugee situation, youth, personal flexibility, and the ability to adapt to a new environment may become traits with a high survival value. Authority patterns...may be subject to challenge along three main dimensions: class, age, and gender” (632).

Despite the current violent rivalry between the groups, their core purpose and intent is not criminal or violent. On the contrary, as noted in previous work,

Important 'positive' values such as solidarity, generosity, and compassion are inherent to gang behaviour in Cairo...[the groups] arrange field trips, football tournaments and other social gatherings, and collect money for peers that need medical treatment. Moreover, visiting ill or injured members seems to be part of mutual loyalty expectations (Rothing 2006: 14).

Data indicates that these positive values still exist currently among the group and are viewed as the greatest incentive for joining. One man explained, *"I joined the group after I was attacked. When I was in the hospital they all came to visit me. That was when I knew people really liked me. Really cared for me. They were my new family, and so I joined."* After the violence among Sudanese youth began to escalate, and the marginalization from the community and access to services became more extreme, the alternatives provided by the groups held even greater importance and arguably solidified the need for such informal social structures. Lewis (2007) comments on these same notions regarding the formation of the groups, stating that "youth gangs demonstrate significant reconceptualization of collective representation...and alternative, refugee-generated means to ensure protection and assistance" (5).

The positive aspects of being associated with either of the groups cannot be disregarded. In addition to having a cadre of friends and supporters, both groups organize a number of social gatherings to "escape reality" for an evening or day. The social gatherings most often were parties in a rented space or on a Nile cruise boat with music and refreshments, day trips to Alexandria (or once a three day trip to Sharm el Sheikh), and football and basketball tournaments. The social gatherings also serve an important and positive role for the female counterparts of these young men, as they are unable to attend nightclubs to socialize with friends without being labeled as a prostitute. Attending parties, Nile cruises, and trips sponsored by the groups do not hold this same stigma.

In addition to the social support and activities offered by the groups, they offer young men a sense of belonging and group identity of which they have otherwise been deprived. One young man explained, *"The things that happen in Sudan, those aren't our problems anymore. Our problems are here. North, South, tribes, religion, that is not who we are. We are [Group A]. We are [Group B]."* These young men have separated themselves from the conflicts and group identity markers traditionally associated with being Sudanese (geographic politics, tribal affiliation, religion) and therefore find themselves not belonging to any type of coherent, structured group. The formation of the groups as a response to this lack of structure fits into a model suggested by Strocka (2005) that these groups should be viewed from a "social identity" perspective as opposed to one that centers on "violence and delinquency" (12).

The sense of belonging gained from membership in either group is essential for obtaining masculinity and respect for young Sudanese men. Particularly due to their perceived (and to a large extent, actual) rejection from the Sudanese community, to reject membership in the Groups would be to find oneself at the margins of society without a support network and lacking in the benefits of group membership. Many young men view the injuries sustained from inter-group violence as a sacrifice to the group as a whole, demonstrating the extreme importance of belonging to a group. This sentiment of self-sacrifice for the whole was expressed by several members of both groups, one young man shouting at a large crowd, *"Look at my body! [Points at scars from an extremely*

violent attack sustained a year ago] I am the one who got injured and hurt! For who? [Group B]! And now you fuck me! [sits down and starts crying] There's no respect. [Screaming] [Group B] – useless!"

The downside to placing such a high value on group membership and identity is when these groups of marginalized youth divide and form a violent rivalry. As mentioned previously, the two groups have claimed territorial autonomy over different areas in Cairo. Because a primary purpose of these groups is to obtain respect, the very presence of a member of the rival group in the opposing group's territory is interpreted as an act of disrespect, even if no violent or criminal act was committed by the "visiting" individual. However, while group rivalry can be identified as a cause of the inter-group violence, it does not necessarily condone or encourage criminal acts and violence against non-group members.

It is important to separate at this point what can be considered "group-sanctioned" acts and individual acts committed by members of the group and how one may influence the other. The leaders of neither group have directly ordered individuals to steal mobile phones or money from individuals walking down the street, but no one was hesitant to admit that these activities do occur. Furthermore, it has never been an organized policy from the leadership of either group to extort money from families of young men who are not involved in the group or refuse to participate in violent activities. One individual shared stories of being asked to give money (between 20LE and 35LE) to individual members of the rival group when they had previously lived in their territory. This money was extorted from them *personally*, not their families, as had been alleged, and only occurred a few times without regularity. The leadership of both groups had never received funds of this nature or benefited from any extortion during their tenure. In response to such allegations, the former leader of Group A noted, *"If we had the skills to collect money on a regular basis, we would be having a lot more parties than we do now."*

The only truly "group-sanctioned" and leadership organized activities are the parties and trips regularly organized by the leadership. These activities levy a significant entrance fee; generally 40LE for parties and 50LE – 100LE for men and 25LE – 50LE for women for trips. In this sense, while the group may not sanction petty theft and extorting money, they do provide an incentive for engaging in these activities. Another arguable incentive for theft is the cost of the hip-hop clothing. Prices on average are about 75LE for a hat, 90LE -120LE for shirts, and 170LE for pants. Shoes can range anywhere from 150LE to 300LE. Jewelry accessories range from 50LE to 150LE. While these prices are not anywhere near as high as authentic labels would be, they are considerably higher than the alternative clothing options available in Cairo. Non-participation in group events is in many ways not an option given the central role the group plays in the individual's identity.

SUDANESE YOUTH HAVE ACCEPTED VIOLENCE AS AN UNAVOIDABLE PART OF THEIR LIVES.

Several Sudanese community members and directors of community-based organizations speak frequently about the ongoing "gang warfare" occurring among the youth in Cairo. In reality however, violence at the hands of Sudanese youth occurs in waves, generally starting with a series of acts of disrespect by trespassing in rival group territory and escalating into violent acts and rounds of retaliation. With the exception of slightly increased frequency during the summer

months¹², these incidents occur approximately every two months and from the time of the initial act of disrespect to the final round of retaliation last approximately 10 days. Although a majority of these attacks will target only rival group members, other community members are sometimes victims of these attacks, primarily in acts of imperfect retaliation.

While many times individuals may believe they are exerting retaliatory justice on an individual who participated in an earlier attack, there are also several cases of “imperfect retaliation” that occur, which may or may not include rival group members. Jacobs (2004) explains the purpose that imperfect retaliation serves, writing:

Imperfect retaliation occurs when grievants reprise someone other than the person who committed the violation. Typically, it is an option of last resort, not first, after grievants have been unable to identify, locate, and punish the wrongdoer in question. Displaced reactions typically accomplish one of three objectives: message-sending, loss recovery, and anger release. These objectives need not be mutually exclusive (312).

These incidents range from “minor” injuries such as cuts to the hand or forehead that may only require outpatient treatment to more severe injuries that may include broken kneecaps, elbows, cracked skulls, and severed limbs. The severity of the attack will depend on the purpose of the retaliation as well as the type of weapons being used. The most severe retaliations occur as the result of attacks against family members or close friends, rather than personal vendetta. One young man explained, *“They attacked me. Fine. I look at them and I say, ‘Thank you,’ But if they touch my little brother [clenches teeth and slowly moves head back and forth staring off into the distance] – I will kill them one by one.”*

Many retaliatory attacks target individuals that were not involved in violence. On several occasions victims would name the same three individuals from the rival group as the perpetrators. This became problematic when the individuals accused would have an alibi for their whereabouts that I

¹² When contemplating the frequency of attacks during the summer, one young man noted, *“Study the month of June. We always get in trouble in June [referring to the death of Maliah Bekam in 2007 during World Refugee Day].”* Another man made a similar statement, reflecting, *“You know, it’s the summer, and it’s very hot in Africa.”* At their height during the course of this research, retaliation attacks were occurring two or three times a day during 16 June and 18 June, although a majority of these planned attacks did not result in any injuries. It is difficult to keep track of the number of incidents occurring during a time period. However, data was collected using trusted group members who would report incidents after they occurred. Only incidents reported by more than one source were recorded as verified.

The “heat effect” on violent behavior has been studied extensively. Anderson (2001) writes,

Numerous fascinating psychological processes might be involved in the typical effect of high temperatures on aggression and violence. The simplest and most powerful ones all revolve around the ‘crankiness’ notion. Being uncomfortable colors the way people see things. Minor insults may be perceived as major ones, inviting (even demanding) retaliation (36).

Violence did indeed decrease following the end of the summer, with the incidents occurring approximately once every two months from October 2008 until January 2009. It is unclear whether this can be attributed to the decrease in temperatures or increased access to programming targeting youth, or a combination thereof.

could personally corroborate. When explored further, it was found that not only is blame quickly assigned many times incorrectly, but also that this information is used to fuel retaliatory attacks and for police reports.

Every young man interviewed who owned a weapon indicated that the primary reason for doing so was to protect themselves, either from Egyptians or from members of the rival group. While several do carry weapons with them on the street or when traveling to areas where they might encounter members of the rival group, a majority indicated that these weapons were left at home and stored either in a closet or under the mattress.

It is important to note that a majority of members of either group do not own weapons of any kind. Because weapons ownership was one of the most sensitive topics discussed, many individuals may not have been forthcoming on this issue. However, it did become clear that many individual would own several weapons, and when “calling upon” others to support them in violent acts would distribute said weapons to those who may not have them. Threat of arrest or deportation has never been a great enough impetus to warrant individuals choosing not to own or carry weapons. On the contrary, the only individuals who are openly opposed to the violence and refuse to carry one themselves do so as a result of suffering from a particularly brutal attack themselves.

Furthermore, it is an even smaller group of individuals who actively plan and premeditate acts of violence or rally others to join them in attacks. Of the total number of individuals who were interviewed (n=158), it was ascertained either through omission or through corroboration from several sources that only seventeen individuals comprised a group of those who initiated violent attacks, 11% of the population. Of those seventeen individuals, detailed profiles and consultations with a psychiatric specialist indicates that four presented traits indicative of serious mental illness that would result in a high propensity to engage in violent acts.¹³

These young men have accepted violence as an unavoidable part of their lives; not only in Cairo, but in the reality and future of Sudan as well. This process of normalization of violence is a coping mechanism commonly employed to protect oneself and avoid psychological disturbance associated with horrendous events. Disassociation is a psychological process whereby the individual compartmentalizes emotions, events, or memories and most often occurs in individuals who have experienced overwhelming stress or have a history of trauma and is common among individuals who are routinely involved in or effected by issues of urban violence (Scheper-Hughes 1995, Pecaut 1999). Both were exhibited among many of the young men on whom this research is centered. These topics will be discussed here to illustrate the mindset of the young men vis-à-vis the violent activities in which they engage. Keller (1975) purports that, “Refugees are not only more aggressive than non-refugees, but more aggressive that they themselves were before” (Keller 1975:3). Benard (1986) offers a few reasons why refugees tend to be more violent than their non-displaced counterparts, citing specifically violence as a “shock reaction to the total disruption of one’s life and the loss of one’s home and property” (627).

Conversations with friends and brothers of victims of violence generally downplayed their severity. While visiting one young man in the hospital who had lost his left eye and whose skull was fractured from a single blow of the machete, his friend characterized his injuries as “not that bad.” Superficial wounds, even those requiring several stitches, surgery, or follow-up physical therapy,

¹³ Among these four individuals, the traits of the following mental disorders were present: paranoid schizophrenia, sociopathic personality disorder, psychopathic personality disorder, and dissociative multiple personality disorder.

were dismissed as being commonplace. Because so many young men have been attacked and injured, normalization of violence as exhibited here is a protective coping mechanism. These young men are aware that any of their close friends could fall victim to an attack at any point, therefore it is easier to downplay the severity of the situation to avoid the psychological disturbance they would suffer from accepting the reality of the situation.

The most significant example of normalization of violence was the overall demeanor and affect of individuals when they described the violent activities in which they had engaged. One young man shared the following story during a scheduled private meeting; his narrative was frequently interrupted because of his laughing while reminiscing the events.

One night I was...visiting my relative for a birthday. In the building there were a group of people having a party and playing music very loud. In Sudan this is considered rude, so I went to tell them to turn the music down. When I knocked on the door, someone opened and I told them to turn the music down. The man responded, "Fuck you. Do you know who we are? We're [Group A]." I had just arrived from Sudan and had no idea who [Group A] were, so I just said "I don't know what that means. Turn the music down." All of a sudden, one of them tried to cut me! By the door there were a bunch of glass bottles, from beer or soda or something, so I started picking them up and breaking them and cutting everyone who came at me. [laughs] Just one after another! Bottle breaking on their heads! [laughs again, noticing my slight disturbance by his demeanor] No there's more! [slams hand on table] I was so angry that I went upstairs and got the gas canister for the stove and a pack of matches. I turned it on and lit the match and there was fire everywhere! [laughing] Everyone started jumping out of windows to get away from the fire [moving hands in a swooping motion to mimic people jumping out of the building]. I was so energized by what I had done that I took off all my clothes [stops to laugh for about 15 seconds] and was running around screaming. [pauses to regain composure, swings face to maintain eye contact with me] I like to be naked when I fight.

A few weeks later, the young man told me that he was ashamed of the manner in which he told me that story, that it was actually something about which he felt a great deal of regret. One young man described the incidents in which he was involved in the following manner: *"When I attack someone, I'm not me. It's like I'm watching myself in a horror film. The things I do – [pauses and holds head in hands, swaying for an extended period of time] they're horrible."*

Similar demeanor was also exhibited when speaking about violence witnessed or engaged in while in Sudan. One young man, a former child soldier in the *Jeysh Ahmar*,¹⁴ responded with the following after being asked if he had ever killed anyone: *"Here? No. Sudan? Of course! Hundreds. [laughs] You just them here [point in between his eyes and boom! Dead!]"*

When asked about how they felt while committing acts of violence, individuals reiterated the feeling of being "outside of my body" or "watching myself in a movie." One young man even described the experience as "feeling like I was in the movie Kill Bill," a movie of vignettes of

¹⁴ Far more sensitive than the subject of "gang" membership, violence, or weapons ownership was the history of being involved in child slavery or forced military enlistment as a child. At the conclusion of the research, there were two known child slaves and two ex-child soldiers, although background information and historical context indicate there may be many more.

extremely violent attacks using swords and machetes. This dissociative coping mechanism indicates that the individual cannot reconcile his actions with what he believes is right from wrong, therefore he separates the two. However, many individuals also shared with me the intense feelings of guilt and remorse felt after they engaged in violent activity.

Fear, insecurity, and violence have become a normal part of routine life for both young Sudanese men who engage in violent activity and the refugee communities in many parts of Cairo. This normalization is a typical response that has been exhibited in a variety of contexts (Esser 2004, Rodgers 2004), as well as post-conflict communities (Hume 2004).

IV: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth are the core of every community, regardless of displacement or location. There is not a single human right that can be guaranteed without investment in young people, for they hold the power to be a transformative asset for peace and development, or the greatest burden a community can face. Young men are traditionally viewed as physically strong, capable, hard-working providers who are considered anything *but* vulnerable. However, if we analyze the power structures required to answer the poignant question “[v]ulnerable to what?” (Clark 2007: 293), we see that not only have these young men been denied access to services and traditional support networks, whether through institutional structures, stigma or self-marginalization, but inability to obtain education and the skills necessary to secure employment and successfully transition to adulthood.

Young Southern Sudanese refugee men in Cairo, Egypt find themselves at the margins of every possible definition of society – both within their host country and their own community. At these margins, young men have divided themselves on seemingly arbitrary lines without regards to race, tribe, religion, or historical conflict. In this struggle for respect, masculinity, and identity they have found support in informal networks – incorrectly identified as “gangs” – which due to an unfortunate series of events has led to a violent rivalry among former friends and blood relatives.

All of the young men interviewed as part of this research migrated to Egypt during or before 2005, meaning that their entire lives have been shaped and characterized by the longest civil war on the African continent. Their realities have consisted of violence, displacement, and a struggle for survival, and life in Egypt has proved to be no different.

Violence is not the problem, but rather the symptom of other underlying problems. This research has shown that marginalization, lack of opportunity, loss of hope for the future, and a normalization of violence have caused youth to turn against each other and resort to violence. While many have referred this problem as a phenomenon – a situation for which the cause is unclear – I argue that given the historical context and lack of opportunity presented to these young men the cause for their desire to own weapons, engage in violence, and obtain masculinity by asserting power over their equals is very clear and is the direct result of the structural violence and marginalization to which they have become accustomed.

Ignoring the violence and its underlying causes will not stop the problem. Groups will continue to grow as younger generations age and begin to face the same structural barriers as these young men. In order to stop the violence, the underlying problems causing youth to assert themselves in this manner must be addressed. Programs aiming to broker peace agreements between the two groups by working with leadership have been unsuccessful in the past and the anger resulting from failed peace agreements can actually spike violence. Instead, programs should focus on addressing the underlying issues of lack of structured activities, limited access to educational and skill training opportunities in order to quell the violence.

The combination of exclusion from mainstream society, self-marginalization, and lack of access to services has rendered those who do engage in violent activities unable to access any sort of traditional support networks or structure, rendering them invisible in this regard. The universal marginalization that young Sudanese men suffer because of the minority who engage in violent and

criminal acts renders them invisible on an individual level. Instead, this group has been proscribed an identity, fate and future based primarily on the assumption that they are simply mimicking African-American culture. Only by addressing violence as a symptom of underlying problems can a solution be found, that will require a significant amount of effort collectively from the Sudanese community, refugee service providers, and the young men themselves.

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations for policy and programming can be made:

- Issues of poverty, marginalization and lack opportunity, specifically with problems surrounding the school-to-work transition in Egypt, afflict both refugees and Egyptian youth. Therefore, it is recommended that national strategies implemented by the National Council for Youth expand their mandate and action plans to include refugee youth as well as Egyptian nationals.
- UNHCR must begin to recognize that vulnerability for young males without family or social support does not end at the age of 18 and thus there is a need to targeted services and programming to young men up to the age of 25 at a minimum, particularly among those who find themselves without family members in their host country.
- Government sponsored youth centers (*markez al-shebab*) should be open to refugees to allow access to safe spaces for recreation, sport and skill-building. In the absence of such a provision, safe spaces for refugee youth (both male and female) should be created in order to implement environmental modification programs preventing youth from passing time in the streets.
- Community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, and UNHCR implementing partners, should review policies and sensitize staff to ensure that at-risk youth are not being denied access to programming or services due to imputed “gang” membership or style of dress.
- There is a clear need for outreach programs to at-risk male youth to re-engage them in skill-building activities and overcome practices of self-marginalization.
- Psycho-social services targeting youth, particularly with emphasis on outreach to ex-child soldiers and ex-child slaves is needed.
- Further research on linkages between the experience of Southern Sudanese youth in camps for the internally displaced outside of Khartoum and youth currently in Egypt should be explored, as preliminary probing on the matter suggests that “gang” membership may find its roots in the street-child experience prior to migration to Egypt.

Finally, as was noted in Section I, this paper represents only a selection of the findings of the research that were suitable to be presented at this time and in this venue. It is with great sadness and ethical struggle that some of the most poignant conclusions were withheld from this document. Therefore, I must also conclude that one of the causes for the severe lack of knowledge and published research on topics surrounding youth violence, including those in the refugee context, is either externally or self-imposed censorship employed to protect research participants and authors.

EPILOGUE

This work represents a “snapshot” of the issues of Southern Sudanese refugee youth in Cairo, Egypt between February 2008 and December 2008. Several young men interviewed for this piece have since returned to Sudan – primarily to areas surrounding Khartoum. Some have even repatriated and since returned to Cairo. The coffee shop in Hadeyek el Maadi that was reliably “packed” with Sudanese every night of the week has since closed. Aligned territories within one of the groups have since turned against each other. Leaders have resigned from their positions of power to more seriously pursue work or educational opportunities. Younger cohorts who had previously been advised to “take care for their future” have taken control with an ever greater propensity to violence and more masculine ideals to prove. Nonetheless, in October 2009, three of the four territories decided to end the rivalry in a peace agreement. Between December 2008 and March 2010, there have been only three incidents of “gang”-related violence, which pales in comparisons to the rates reported during this research.

Programs targeting at-risk youth, specifically those mentioned in this research, have begun and been successful in engaging young men in skill-building and psycho-social activities. These programs were based directly on the findings of this research and have achieved great levels of success both in terms of high attendance rates at *ad hoc* youth centers and decreasing “gang” violence.

Unfortunately, since March 2009, there has been an increase in tribal violence among the same youth who previously engaged in “gang” violence. This shift was unprecedented and the causes for this new trend are unknown. Since March 2009, there have been three deaths as a result of these attacks, almost as many deaths related to “gang” violence between 2005 and 2008. This represents an unsettling trend that has the potential to pose an even larger threat to the safety and security of the refugee community than before.

Far before this report was released both formal and informal dissemination of its findings helped sensitize the refugee community to the issues facing young men and the causes of youth violence. To this end, I am pleased to find that these young are not nearly as marginalized as they were at the onset of the research. However, with increasing trends of tribal violence among youth it is now more crucial than ever that all members of the Sudanese community – adults and youths alike – take a zero-tolerance stance against violence and violent retribution in all its forms.

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