

Youth needs a future

The concept of "youth" and its sociological positioning differs considerably depending on the cultural, religious and political context. Taking the 15-24 age group ($15 < x < 25$) as our basis (as used by the UNO), perceptions associated with that group differ substantially in Switzerland compared to Peru, and again between Peru and Zambia. When the age pyramid (see point 1) is very slim and tall as in Switzerland, "youth" is essentially synonymous with an "incubation period" for adulthood (schooling, vocational training, finding a job, choosing a partner). If, however, the pyramid is broad and flat, as in Kenya or Zambia, then "youth" is essentially an early phase of adulthood, even though the actual age range is the same (and will therefore involve paid work, parental duties, taking care of family, training). The social organisation of geriatric care also has a direct impact on the concept of "youth": in most countries in the North (and in some in the South), children and youngsters have little involvement in taking care of needy parents; the opposite is true in countries in the South. In many countries in the Global South, cultural and sometimes religious reasons determine that the average timing of starting a family (i.e. first pregnancy carried to term) is many years (sometimes up to 10 and over) earlier than in the Global North. In Switzerland, the average is now 31.7 years, compared to 19.2 years in Zambia. This obviously has a major impact on the concept of "youth". In many countries, one differentiates between "youth" (*juventud; youth*) and "adolescence" (*adolescencia; adolescence*); in German-speaking countries, the term "young adults" is increasingly used for the latter category.

When considering the statistical data and graphs analysed in this document, one should therefore always bear in mind, and be aware of, both gender and intercultural aspects in relation to the concept of "youth". There are no standard culture-independent definitions of "childhood", "youth" and "adulthood" – we also note that within one and the same culture, these terms also change as time passes. In Europe, there was no sociological term for "childhood" until into the 18th century; this period was simply regarded as "incomplete adulthood" or as the precursor phase to adulthood; the concept of "childhood" was formally established by educational theorists (Pestalozzi, Rousseau). It took even longer to establish the concept of "youth" (which is still virtually non-existent in many countries in the Global South), widely regarded as an extension of the "period of grace" accorded to children. These days, one talks of "adolescentisation" of the population in the Global North, i.e. an artificial prolongation of the sociological age associated with "youth" beyond the age of 30 (as reflected by average age at the time of birth of the first child and general advertising strategies for this age segment). In the Global South, on the other hand, we note a trend in the opposite direction due to poverty, unemployment and educational crises: children have to become adults as fast as possible, there is simply no time or place for "youth" (in the sense of an extended period of grace or incubation period for adulthood). See challenges, "Stolen youth".

The data used in this core document come mainly from the following sources: national statistical offices, official websites, online databases, statistical yearbooks and official publications in the respective countries, demographic investigations such as "Demographic and Health Surveys", "Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys" and "Performance and Monitoring Accountability (PMA) 2020 Surveys", the "UN Demographic Yearbook 2015" and the "Population and Vital Statistics Report" of the statistical department of the United Nations, the "World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision" of the UN population department and data sources of the International Programs Center of the U.S. Census Bureau, the online database "World Development Indicators" of the World Bank, the online database "AIDSinfo" of UNAIDS, Population Pyramid.net and the online database "FAOSTAT" of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

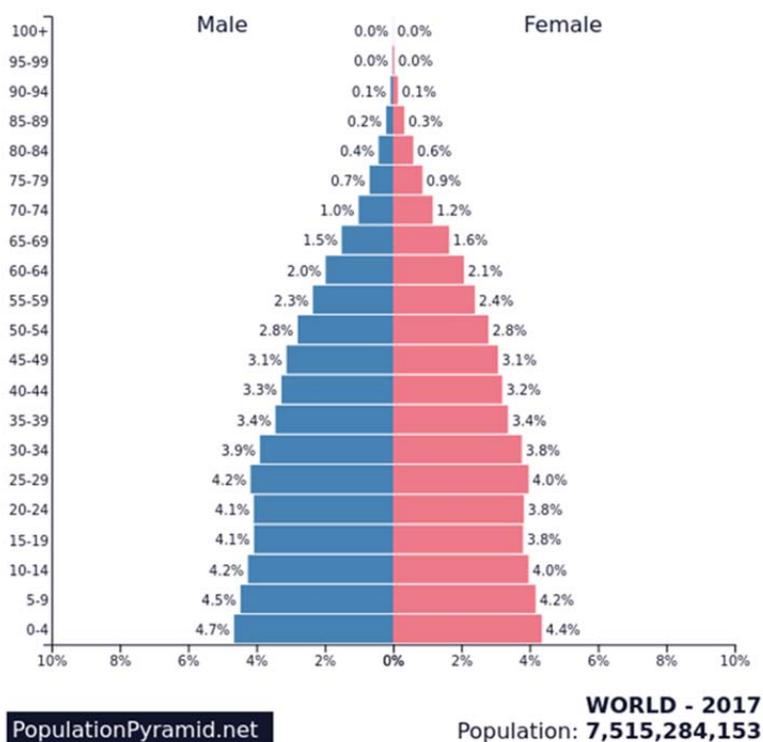
1. The demographic gap

Besides many cultural, social and economic differences, the age structure of society is a significant differentiated feature between the Global North and the Global South. In the Global North, people are increasingly worried about the impact of an ageing society on pension funding, but millions of young people in the Global South fret about ever having a job at all, or the income that goes with it. Whereas many seventy-year-olds are still young and fit in the North, this group constitutes a small and dwindling minority of old men and women in the South.

The demographic gap between the Global North and the Global South is clearly illustrated by the corresponding age pyramids: for most countries in the Global North, these tend to resemble a standard lamp more than a pyramid, and the worldwide pyramid looks something like a cypress tree. We reproduce the age pyramids with most relevance to COMUNDO work below, i.e. those of the seven countries in which COMUNDO operates, and, by way of comparison, the worldwide average, plus that of the "youngest" country – South Sudan – and the age structure in Switzerland.

Here, to start with, is the worldwide average:

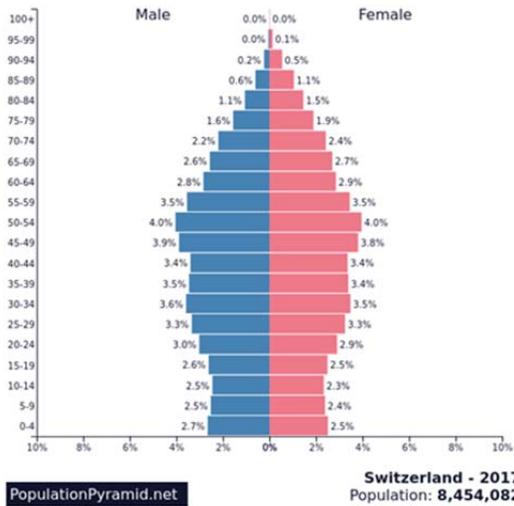
Worldwide age pyramid (2017):



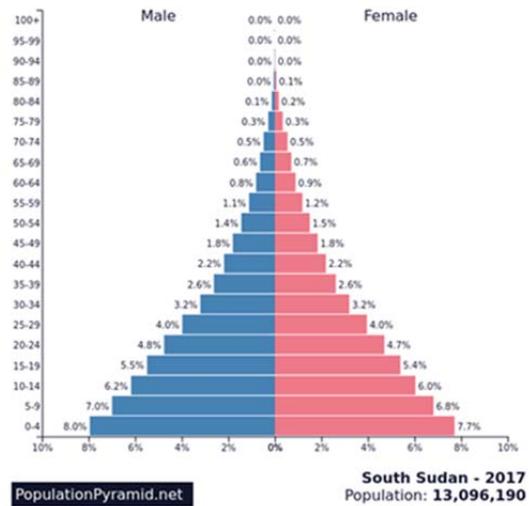
It is noticeable that, as far as the worldwide average is concerned, the percentage figure per age group falls continuously, if only very slightly, from young to old.

Now compare this to Switzerland on the one hand, and South Sudan, the "youngest" country, on the other:

Age structure Switzerland:



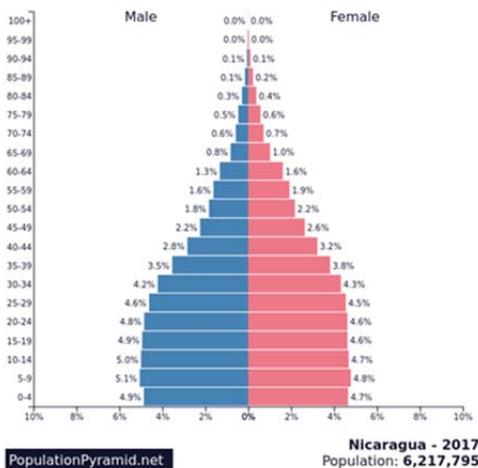
Age structure South Sudan:



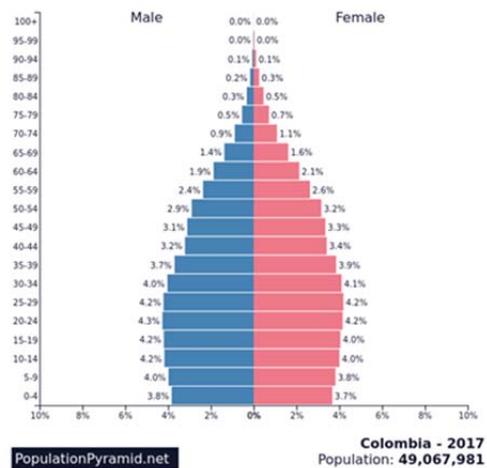
The differences are striking: whereas in Switzerland, children and young people (0-25 years) make up only a relatively narrow base (like a slightly thicker tree trunk) compared to the 25-60 age group (roughly a quarter of the total population), the same age group forms a huge base in South Sudan, accounting for well over half of the total population. In Switzerland, the baby boomer generation (the widest segments) is approaching retirement age, and is likely to exacerbate the problem of "ageing of the population" even further. In South Sudan, however, the disproportionate number of children and young people are the major challenge; they make up well over half the population but cannot yet contribute to value creation; instead, they are dependent on high levels of investment, especially in education. Chronic youth unemployment is inevitable.

Here are the age pyramids for the countries in which we operate:

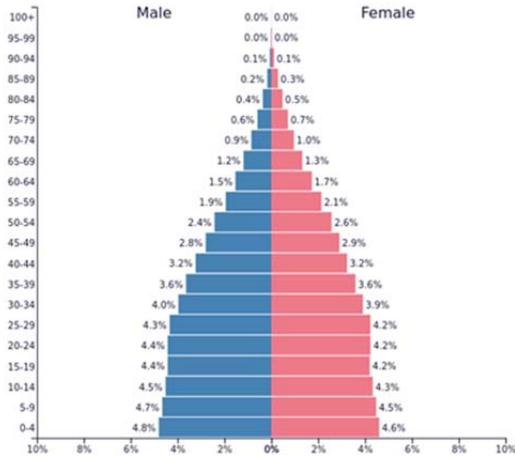
Nicaragua:



Colombia:

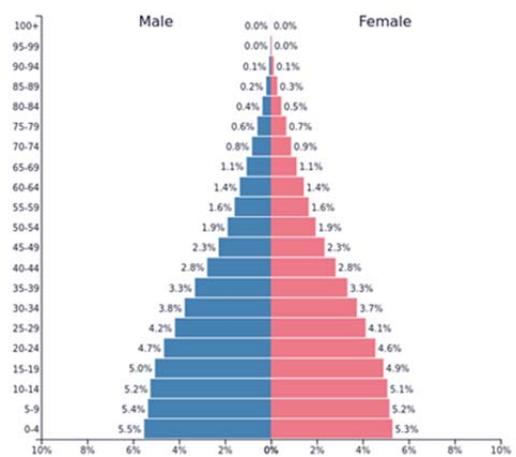


Peru:



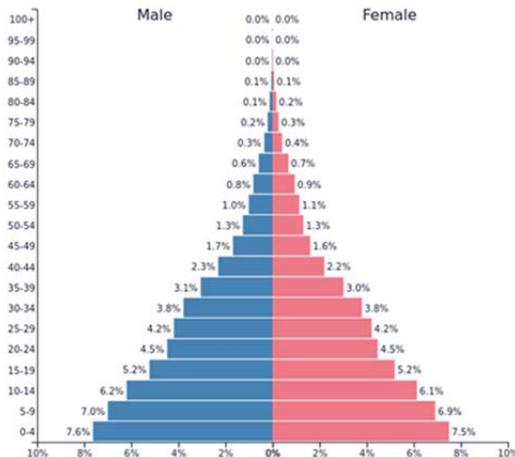
Peru - 2017
Population: 32,166,473

Bolivia:



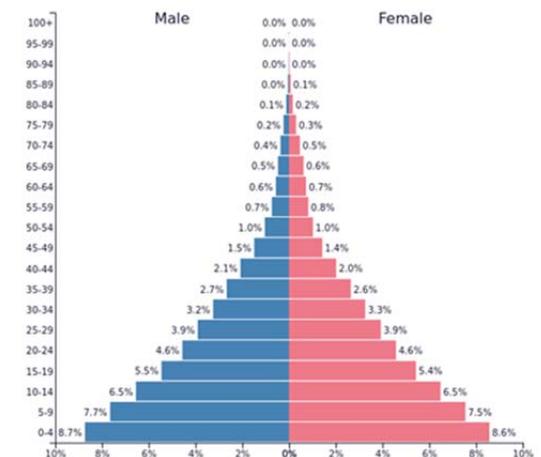
Bolivia (Plurinational State of) - 2017
Population: 11,052,863

Kenya:



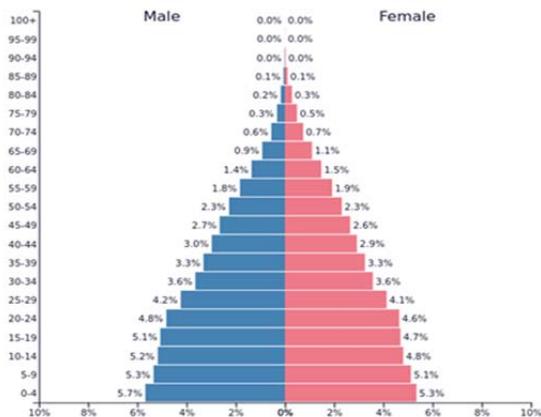
Kenya - 2017
Population: 48,466,927

Zambia:



Zambia - 2017
Population: 17,237,931

Philippines:



Philippines - 2017
Population: 103,796,831

With the exception of Colombia, the age structures in these countries exhibit the "pyramid" structure typical of the Global South, in which each successive age group makes up a smaller segment of the population than the previous one. Even so, the relative differences are quite significant. A comparison of the pyramids for Nicaragua and Zambia shows, for example, that the main weight of the population in the Central American country rests on the age groups from 0 to 50, whereas in Zambia, it is spread across the 0 to 30 age groups, pointing to a higher fertility rate in Zambia and higher life expectancy in Nicaragua. This will have to be verified from further statistical information.

Generally, one may say that the age structure of the Latin American countries resembles that of countries in the Global North, that the Philippines and Bolivia occupy the middle ground (i.e. close to the world average), and that the African countries are clearly positioned close to South Sudan, chosen as a representative extreme for the Global South. In the past fifty years, however, even these countries have moved away from a much more typical pyramid shape (wide base moving rapidly towards a narrow centre and tapered tip), which may generally have something to do with an increase in life expectancy and a reduction in fertility and mortality rates.

The age structure provides a good indication of age group distribution in the respective countries and the related problem areas. If we define the economically productive age as between 15 and 65 (child labour is allowed from age 15, and age 65 marks the start of retirement), there is little variation between the countries in the Global North and those in the Global South. In Switzerland, for example, approx. 64% fall within the productive age group, 54.8% in South Sudan, 70% in Colombia and 51.6% in Zambia. However, one should take a closer look at economic value creation because in some countries in the South, well over 50% of individuals in the economically productive age group are unemployed or engaged in precarious or informal work, and hence, on average, a person working in the South has to "feed" many more persons than a person working in the North. In contrast to the situation in the North, these workers are essentially young people.

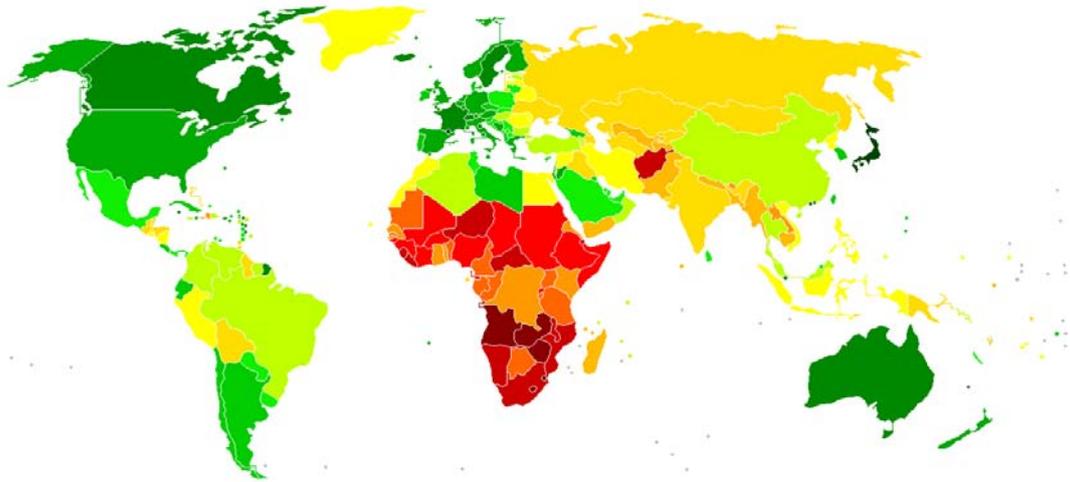
In the Global North, due to demographic reasons, the most urgent problem at the moment is that of retirement funding: how can a continually declining group of the population (employed persons of productive age) ensure the continued long-term existence of an ever-growing group of persons (retirees)? In the Global South, however, the most urgent issue is: how can a relatively small base of working persons in very precarious circumstances ensure the continued existence of so many children and young people? Those in the North run the risk of "age-related poverty" and "inadequate provision" for the elderly, whereas those in the South face the risk of "child poverty" and neglect affecting entire generations (*lost generations*).

2. Average life expectancy

Another indicator providing information about a society's age structure, and hence about the relative position of children and young people, is the average life expectancy of the population of a country (by which we mean the life expectancy at birth of a person in the country in question). In the past fifty years, this has moved upward in virtually every country around the world, yet the difference between the country with the highest life expectancy and that with the lowest has remained virtually unchanged or decreased only slightly.

According to statistics published in the *CIA World Factbook*, a person born in Monaco in 2014 had an average life expectancy of 89.57 years, whereas someone born in Chad had a life expectancy of just 49.44 years - a whole 40 years fewer. According to the 2015 UNO List, Japan came top with 83.5 years, and Sierra Leone bottom with 45.3 years. Both methods of measurement indicated that the difference between the top and bottom countries was somewhere between 38.2 and 40.13 years, which means that, on average, a Japanese man or woman lives some 40 years longer than an inhabitant of Sierra Leone.

Here too, the gulf between the Global North and the Global South is obvious, as the following illustration shows. The countries with the highest life expectancy (dark green) are located in the Global North (includes Australia and New Zealand), those with the lowest in the Global South, and within the South, in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular (brown and red).



Average life expectancy worldwide:

70 years and over

Under 70 years

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| • 82 years and over | • 65–69 years |
| • 80–81 years | • 60–64 years |
| • 78–79 years | • 55–59 years |
| • 76–77 years | • 50–54 years |
| • 74–75 years | • 45–49 years |
| • 72–73 years | • 40–44 years |
| • 70–71 years | • 35–39 years |

In 2007, inhabitants of **Andorra** looked forward to the highest life expectancy **at 83.5 years** (2015: 82.72); the lowest, **34.1 years**, was reserved for the inhabitants of **Swaziland** in Africa, (2015: 51.05). This gap of almost 50 years was much bigger than it is today. If we look at the trend in the major geographical areas, it is striking how average life expectancy has increased (sometimes considerably) in every area of the world, with a much more significant increase over the past sixty years in Latin America in particular (22.1 years), followed by Africa (17 years) and Asia (16.1 years), than in Australia & New Zealand (11.6 years), Europe (9.8 years) and North America (9.5 years).

Trend in average life expectancy by major geographical area for the period 1950-2010

	1950	2010
Africa	38.2	55.2
Asia	42.9	69.0
Europe	65.6	75.4
Latin America & Caribbean	51.3	73.4
North America	68.7	78.2
Australia & New Zealand	69.4	81.2

3. Life expectancy, birth rate and mortality rate

As we have already seen, the age pyramid has much to do with the birth rate, but also with the level of medical care available, and more or less sufficient, and balanced, nutrition. The relatively rapid "tapering" of the age pyramid in countries in the Global South is related to poor nutrition, bad drinking water, lack of, or inadequate, medical care and unsatisfactory standards of education; taken overall, these factors point to poverty as the general primary reason for child mortality, maternal mortality, premature death and a generally lower life expectancy.

According to the 2017 report by the *German Foundation for World Population (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung DSW)*, the synopsis of life expectancy, birth rate and mortality rate worldwide is as follows:

Country	Life Expectancy	Birth Rate	Mortality Rate	Ranking Life Expectancy
	Expectancy at birth in years (ø men and women)	(Number of births per year /1000 residents)	(Number of deaths per year /1000 residents)	Ranking according to UNO 1-185
World	72	20	8	110
Switzerland	83.5	11	8	3
Colombia	76	18	6	83
Peru	74.5	20	6	70
Nicaragua	75	20	5	71
Philippines	69.5	23	7	117
Bolivia	68.5	24	7	128
Kenya	66.5	32	6	148
Zambia	61.5	39	8	160

Whilst differences between the Global North (represented here by Switzerland) and the Global South are striking in terms of life expectancy and birth rate, differences in the mortality rate are insignificant. We have already commented on life expectancy. The worldwide birth rate is almost double that of Switzerland, and between 1.6 and 4 times higher in the countries in which COMUNDO operates. The mortality rate should really be virtually the same in all countries, simply because everyone dies eventually, irrespective of life expectancy and birth rate. Here again – just like age structure – significant differences are seen in the average age at death, i.e. in life expectancy. People die much younger in the Global South than in the Global North.

The relative differences in the mortality rate across the individual countries in which COMUNDO works cannot be explained solely in terms of differing age structures and life expectancies. Why is the mortality rate in Zambia more than twice that in Peru, and almost two and a half times higher than in Nicaragua, for example? HIV/AIDS is most certainly one of the reasons. But why is the rate in Kenya so different when the age pyramids in Zambia and Kenya are practically identical? This is presumably related to the education system and the varying standards in basic education, illiteracy and vocational training in both countries.

Very probably, it also has something to do with child and maternal mortality rates, and with the total fertility rate (number of children per woman of child-bearing age), which, in Zambia, is almost four times (5.2) that in Switzerland (1.5), and one-and-a-half times higher than that in Kenya, as the table below shows. Here again, we see the "learning divide" between the Global North and the Global South, as well as between countries in the Global South. Here too, however – and this obviously correlates with the age structure – there has been a spectacular decline over the past fifty years in virtually every country, both in the Global North and the Global South. Countries in the Global North hit the bottom some twenty years ago at 1.5 to 2 children per woman of child-bearing age; most countries in the Global South are still on their way down.

Fertility rate and persons between 0-15 years as percentage of total population:

Country	<15 years as % of total population	Fertility rate (children/women of child-bearing age)
Worldwide	26	2.5
Switzerland	15	1.5
Colombia	26	2
Peru	28	2.4
Nicaragua	30	2.2
Philippines	32	2.8
Bolivia	32	2.9
Kenya	41	3.9
Zambia	45	5.2

The higher total fertility rate in countries in the Global South is not simply a matter of inadequate family planning and/or religious-cultural factors, but also of compelling economic reasons: in many countries children are still regarded as "old age insurance" because there is no state pension scheme and virtually no one can afford a private pension, except for the minority employed in the formal sector.

This is evident from the first column of the above table, showing children under 15 years as a percentage of the total population. In Zambia, for example, the figure is three times higher than in Switzerland, and one and a half that of the Philippines. In Zambia, practically half the population is younger than 15, with children and young people (0-25 years) together making up two-thirds of the total population; in Switzerland this group accounts for only a third. This uneven age structure distribution between the geographical regions appears as follows:

	Under 15 years	Over 64 years
Africa	41%	3%
Latin America and Caribbean	26%	8%
Worldwide	26%	9%
Asia	24%	8%
Oceania	23%	12%
North America	19%	15%
Europe	16%	18%

Surprisingly, the two age groups together (i.e. under 15 and over 64) add up to almost the same percentage (between 33% and 36%) everywhere, except in Africa; hence, the age group representing the productive population (>15 and <64) is also almost the same, i.e. between 64% and 67%. In Africa, on the other hand, the percentage of the population with "value creating" capacity in economic terms is just 56%. Regarding the issue of ageing population and explosion of youth, however, the decisive factor lies in the difference between the two columns. Everywhere in the world except Europe, "children" (<15) outweigh the "elderly" (>64), but, once again, the relative differences are very large in the Global South: whereas in Africa, the "elderly" represent only 7.3% of the "children", they represent 30.8% in Latin America, 33.3% in Asia, 52.2% in Oceania, 79% in North America and a huge 112.5% in Europe.

4. Literacy rate and higher vocational training

Training and level of education, or access to education, is another indicator of the situation of children and young people. Two specific indicators may be used as a yardstick: average literacy rate (although this also includes adults and the elderly) and level of higher vocational training. There are difficulties in comparing different education systems of course, and we base our analysis on secondary education that follows on from primary school, but recognise that this in no way necessarily equates with the Swiss "secondary level" (i.e. mandatory 9th school year).

Worldwide, for Switzerland as an example of a country in the Global North, and for the countries in which COMUNDO is active, these indicators are as follows:

Country	Literacy rate (percentage of total population able to read and write)	Secondary school certificate (% of population)
Worldwide	86.3	51
Switzerland	99.9	84
Colombia	94.7	62
Peru	94.5	73
Nicaragua	82.8	31
Philippines	96.3	71
Bolivia	95.7	54
Kenya	78	41
Zambia	33.4	25

The literacy rate indicates the percentage of the total population able to read and write; it does not include "functional illiteracy", i.e. people who have learned to read and write, but have lost these skills due to lack of practice, and therefore report great difficulties with texts. If those with functional illiteracy were included, the percentage literacy rate would be very much lower - even in Switzerland.

Here, too, there is a huge gap between the Global North (with Switzerland by way of example), where the literacy rate is practically 100%, and the Global South, with, on average, around 20%

illiteracy. Within the Global South we note a further illiteracy gap between Latin American and Asian countries on the one hand (average: approx. 6%) and Africa (average: approx. 32%). In a comparison between Latin American countries, Nicaragua is strikingly inferior, which – as we will see – correlates with the number of students gaining a secondary school certificate and the relatively short period of compulsory schooling. It would seem, therefore, that this Central American country - possibly because of civil war and reconstruction – still suffers from a large educational deficit, whereas in other countries on the same continent, despite higher poverty rates in places (Bolivia, for example), this is heading towards zero, structurally at least.

Among the countries in which COMUNDO operates, the Philippines have the lowest illiteracy rate at 3.7%, thereby outperforming Turkey (5%), South Africa (5.7%) and even European Malta (5.9%). The rate in Zambia is striking, where well over one third of the population can neither read nor write; in Kenya, approximately one fifth of the population is illiterate. These continental differences point to varying historic backgrounds and different rates of implementation of education programmes. According to the UNESCO World Education Report 2015, schooling is compulsory in 95 percent of countries worldwide; 23 countries have published legislation to this effect since the year 2000. Generally, the introduction of compulsory schooling went ahead much later in African countries than in Latin America, for example, which also has to do with different backgrounds in terms of decolonisation and formal establishment of a democratic state based on the rule of law. In Zambia, for example, there is still no compulsory school attendance, which partially explains the high illiteracy rate. In most countries in which COMUNDO works, (compulsory) primary and secondary schooling is free, but many children do not attend due to the cost of school uniforms, shoes, equipment and transport.

Statistics on "school dropouts", i.e. the percentage of children and young people who drop out of the school system before completion of compulsory schooling (a period of between 5 and 14 years, depending on the country), reveal the following trend in selected areas of the Global South:

	1970	2000
Sub-Saharan Africa	28.5%	43%
East Asia/Oceania	51%	2%
Latin America/Caribbean	19%	4.8%
South Asia	45%	34.5%

In the past 30 years, whereas the school dropout rate has been reduced to virtually zero in the emerging nations of East Asia and in Oceania, and to a quarter in Latin America and the Caribbean, it remains high in southern Asia and has even risen significantly in Africa south of the Sahara despite a huge increase in the number of children attending school (by 23% in Sub-Saharan Africa). Girls make up the greater part of these school dropouts in both these areas. In 2005, 87 percent of primary-school age children worldwide attended primary school, 4 percent more than in 1999. Particularly high growth rates were noted in Sub-Saharan Africa (23%) and South and West Asia (11%). Between 1999 and 2005, the number of children not attending school fell by 24 million to 72 million worldwide. Some 10% of all children around the world still do not attend school; children from poor, indigenous and socially weak population groups remain disadvantaged.

In terms of "higher" education and vocational training (beyond the period of compulsory education, and not available at all in Zambia, for example), the differences between the Global North and the Global South are even more striking. Whereas in Switzerland, 84% of the population holds a "secondary school certificate", the worldwide average is only 51%. In the countries in which COMUNDO operates, Peru (73%), the Philippines (71%), Colombia (62%) and Bolivia (54%) are all positioned above this average, but Kenya (41%), Nicaragua (31%) and Zambia (25%) are all below, and well below in some cases. Only this percentage has access to further education. This does not say a great deal about vocational training per se, however: in most countries in the Global South, secondary education is not linked to vocational training and for those wishing to continue their studies, university is virtually the only choice. Despite the overall increase, the percentage of people with a tertiary education (university, technical college, institute, apprenticeship) is still indicative of an obvious education gap between the Global North (and the emerging nations) and the Global South:

People with tertiary education:

	1970	2000
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.2%	4%
East Asia/Oceania	0.3%	10.2%
South Asia	4.5%	7%
Latin America/Caribbean	7%	19.5%
Emerging nations	11.5%	34%
Global North	28%	61%

In Africa today (2017), just 5% of the population has completed any sort of vocational training, be it academic or practical.

5. Youth unemployment

With regard to youth unemployment (people between 15 and 24 years), it is extremely difficult to draw comparisons between countries in the Global North and Global South due to the general lack of statistical information in the South, or because the term "unemployment" means something different to what it means in the industrialised nations. In the Global North, a person is regarded as "unemployed" if he or she has no formal work, i.e. no regular income from employment, and hence is not part of the formal value creation process. This "youth unemployment" is generally cushioned by social security benefits and alternative training and internships. In countries in the Global South, the percentage of formally employed persons (whether in the public or private sector) represents only a small percentage of the total employed. So-called "informal" work (casual labour, no formal contract, no social security benefits) accounts for the greater part of total employment by far. The term "unemployment" as used formally in the Global North (meaning existence of employment contracts, social security payments, etc.) applies to a large part of the population in countries in the Global South, up to 80% in some cases, but does not necessarily mean that this group has no work at all, only that many are active in the informal sector.

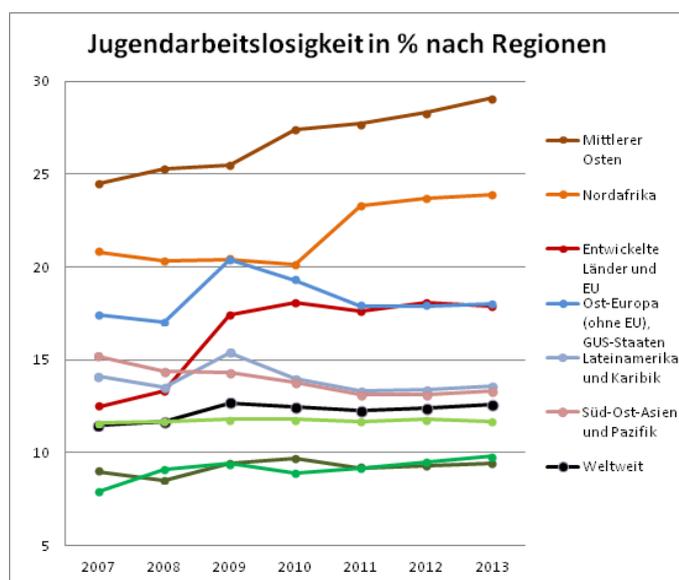
Worldwide youth unemployment is estimated at around 13.55%. Yet the greatest unemployment is found not in the Global South, but rather in many EU member states, the majority of which report double-digit percentages, some of which are clearly extreme values:

Rate of youth unemployment (June 2011) in the European Union:



On a global scale, the highest youth unemployment is found in the Arab countries of the Middle East and the Maghreb, Eastern Europe and the EU. Youth unemployment has risen, dramatically in some cases, in almost every area of the world over the past ten years:

Rate of Youth Unemployment in % by major regions:



Youth unemployment 2013

Region	Percentage of 15-24 year-olds	Youth unemployment as ratio of overall unemployment
Global North	17.7	2.4
Central & Eastern Europe	16.8	2.6
East Asia	10.4	3.0
South East Asia/Oceania	13.5	5.9
South Asia	9.9	4.0
Latin America/Caribbean	13.4	2.9
Middle East	27.9	3.8
North Africa	30.2	3.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	11.6	1.9

This table shows that the figures for youth unemployment and youth unemployment as a ratio of overall unemployment are inversely proportional to GDP, wealth, life expectancy and level of education. This means, for example, that youth unemployment is relatively low in Sub-Saharan Africa and, expressed as a ratio of overall unemployment, it is the lowest of all the regions, even though this is the region with the lowest life expectancy, the lowest per capita GDP and the lowest level of education. By implication, one would have to conclude that high youth unemployment in the Global North and Arab countries has led to an army of highly trained young people, some with high academic qualifications (which is indeed the case).

Two phenomena are associated with this: a willingness on the part of young people (especially men) to join extremist organisations (concerns the Middle East and North Africa in particular), and the *Brain Drain*, which tends to be found more in regions such as South East Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe. Generally speaking one may say that, given the high life expectancy in countries in the Global North and the emerging nations, older workers (between 45 and 65) deprive younger people (15 to 24) of work, this being less the case in Africa, South Asia and East Asia in particular.

6. Migration

According to UNICEF, children and young people are now particularly affected by migration and flight:

- Children make up around one third of the world population, but account for half of all refugees.
- In 2015, some 45 percent of all child refugees under the mandate of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) came from Syria or Afghanistan.
- 28 million children are fleeing from violence and conflict. They include 10 million children forced to flee beyond national frontiers, one million girls and boys in asylum proceedings and an estimated 17 million children and young people in flight inside their home country.
- More and more children and young people are leaving their home country alone, embarking on the arduous journey without the protection of their parents or other relatives. In 2015, over 100,000 unaccompanied minor asylum seekers (UMA) applied for asylum in 78 countries – three times as many as in 2014. Unaccompanied child refugees are especially at risk of falling victim to exploitation and abuse.
- Around 20 million children have left their home country for various reasons, to escape extreme poverty or gang crime, for example. Without official papers, these children run a greater risk of being abused or imprisoned precisely because of their lack of papers and clarified residential status. These children frequently fall through the gaps in systems set up to protect them because there is no systematic registration or monitoring of their well-being.
- According to UNICEF, Turkey has accepted the largest number of refugees worldwide. But Lebanon houses the most refugees per resident. Measured in terms of economic strength, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Pakistan have the most refugees in their care.
- In many countries, money sent back by migrants to their countries of origin now constitute the biggest source of income. For the youngsters left behind, this revenue may in part be the cause of "unwise investment" in the latest gadgets, discontinuation of studies and general unwillingness to seek stable employment.

For more information and statistical tables please refer to:

<https://www.unicef.ch/sites/default/files/report-uprooted.pdf>

For the reasons leading to the migration of children and young people, see below, "Challenges".

7. Challenges facing young people in the countries in which COMUNDO operates

The countries in which COMUNDO operates exhibit some significant differences in terms of life expectancy, birth rate, fertility rate, literacy rate, level of education and youth unemployment. Notwithstanding, children and young people all have to battle with very similar problems and challenges. These are outlined below, with no claim to completeness. As in the North, a gender gap is evident. The challenges and problems described have a disproportionately greater impact on girls and young women than they do on boys and young men. When considering awareness-raising measures and campaigns devoted to the subject of "Youth needs a future", one must therefore always keep the gender perspective in mind and pay due regard to gender-related disadvantage, violence, insecurity and discrimination.

A. "Stolen youth": child labour, early pregnancies, care work

In the Global North, one may speak in sociological terms about an "adolescentisation" of society, meaning that adolescents, i.e. youngsters in the age group between childhood and adulthood, not only take up more and more space – "youth" now extends well beyond 30 and also starts increasingly early – but also determine the mainstream with respect to consumption, lifestyle and values. One might also claim that the Global North (and Europe in particular) discovered "childhood" as a self-contained phase of life in the 18th century (Pestalozzi, Rousseau), and "youth" or "adolescence" in the late 20th century and early 21st. Many countries in the Global South however are now starting to recognise childhood as a distinct phase of life and this is reflected in the growing move to prohibit child labour, institute the right to play, and in concern for age-appropriate clothes, food and education.

In the South, however, this phase (of childhood) runs virtually seamlessly into adulthood, which begins as early as 15 for many and goes hand in hand with a multitude of tasks and responsibilities

which "young people" in the Global North do not have to assume in full until aged 30 or even later. They include working for a regular income, starting a family, taking care of other family members and older people, searching for an adequate livelihood and raising their own children. The concept of "youth" as a canvas for experimentation and as a creative explorative process is necessarily abandoned; children are catapulted into adult life all at once. There is no room for the traditional "years of learning and travel", which those living in the Global North regard as so essential in terms of finding one's identity and dealing with life's challenges later on. Early pregnancies and hard working conditions at a young age also pose a risk to health in the Global South, and this is one of the reasons for the lower life expectancy. This "stolen youth" undoubtedly contributes to school dropouts, migration and, in some contexts, the emergence of gangs (as in Central America).

Whereas child labour is generally condemned in the Global North (and by the UNO), in many countries in the Global South it plays an important and central role in the context of ensuring a family livelihood, looking after siblings when parents are absent and early adoption of parental duties in case of pregnancy at a young age. Youth is "stolen" due to different factors: forced paid labour; having to take care of younger siblings when parents are absent; early pregnancies; recruitment by gangs and criminal organisations; discontinued schooling and forced migration.

Girls and young women are particularly affected. Many girls are forced to look after their siblings from a very early age because both parents have to leave the family home to earn an income. Girls are also more likely than boys to suffer sexual abuse in the family. Finally, it is rare that girls are free to choose their own partner or work, let alone shape the future course of their lives. Whilst young men are usually permitted a phase of "experimentation", this is largely taboo for girls and young women. They are usually catapulted from childhood directly into adulthood, and also motherhood as a result of early pregnancies.

B. Education deficits

In many COMUNDO countries there are no, or very few, alternatives to what is often a very long but relatively undifferentiated period of compulsory schooling followed by admission to university, although even the latter does not necessarily provide access to social advancement and improved quality of life. Even in countries with a relatively high education rate and low level of school dropouts, there are few opportunities for young people on the labour market. As a result, many remain stuck in the "informal" sector, despite a relatively high level of education. Skilled vocational training is only available in exceptional cases and training courses with a relatively practical slant such as nursing, tourism, accounting and IT applications, are mostly offered at university level, and are often excessively theoretical.

Years of compulsory schooling:

	1998	2015
Worldwide average	9	9
Switzerland	9	12
Bolivia	8	14
Peru	12	14
Colombia	10	10
Nicaragua	6	7
Kenya	-	12
Zambia	-	9
Philippines	7	13

Although the worldwide average period of compulsory schooling has remained unchanged in the past 20 years, it has increased slightly, or indeed greatly (Bolivia, Philippines), in virtually all the countries in which COMUNDO operates (except Colombia), or has been introduced for the first time (Kenya). Zambia is the only country in which there is still no compulsory schooling. One should not, however, equate a longer period of compulsory schooling with a higher standard of education

across the population. In most COMUNDO countries, compulsory schooling is the same (i.e. no differentiation by type of school at secondary level, as in Switzerland) for all children and young people irrespective of their academic results and professional ambitions and usually leads, in theory at least, to eligibility for admission to university. In most cases there are no alternatives to tertiary education at university level; there are no apprenticeships, vocational colleges, training establishments for manual professions, etc.). Many training courses offered at secondary level in the Global North (nursing, primary school teaching, tourism, administration, commercial skills, IT applications, etc.) are available at university level only, and are very theoretical. In practice, only a fraction of young people actually complete compulsory schooling.

Young people in the Global South are not only inadequately trained (especially in terms of linguistic competence and ability to learn independently), they often receive the wrong training, or training that is not appropriate to the requirements of the society in which they live. In most COMUNDO countries there is also a big gap between state education facilities ("state schools", "state universities") and private providers; as a result, the existing class-based society is cemented further, or even exacerbated, by education, aggravating the problem of social inequality (reflected in a particularly high Gini coefficient). In many COMUNDO countries education is still seen as a cost factor rather than as an investment in the future.

Gini Index 2014(100: total unequal distribution; 0: total equal distribution of income):

	2014	Highest value between 1990 and 2014
Worldwide average	38.8	43.2
Switzerland	31.64	34.47
Bolivia	48.4	63.00
Peru	44.14	56.36
Colombia	53.5	58.74
Nicaragua	47.05	50.36
Kenya	48.51	57.46
Zambia	54.62	60.51
Philippines	43.04	46.17

Although the Gini index has fallen over the past 25 years in all COMUNDO countries, indicating that the distribution of income has become somewhat fairer (strikingly so in some cases, as in Bolivia), it is still higher (much higher, in some cases) in all these countries than the worldwide average. By way of comparison, the extremes in 2014 were 65.00 in South Africa (the country with the greatest inequalities) and 24.8 in Ukraine (the land with the greatest equalities).

There are further glaring differences between the sexes with regard to access to education. School absenteeism is much higher amongst girls than amongst boys, the number of completed school years fewer and the qualifications obtained lower, hence the opportunities for social advancement are more limited. Girls and young women frequently have to abandon their education prematurely due to early pregnancies, care work at home or the need to secure income for a large family. Vocational training is rare for young men, and almost non-existent for young women.

It is notable, however, that the percentage of girls who commence tertiary education is higher than amongst boys, both worldwide (38% versus 34%) and in individual countries in which we work such as Peru (43% versus 43%), Colombia (60% versus 52%) and the Philippines (40% versus 31%); in Kenya and Zambia, the percentages are very low and in favour of the boys (5% versus 3%). In most countries in which we work, university is the only alternative for tertiary education in subjects such as tourism, nursing, accounting, management and teaching (all of which are attractive to young women).

C. Lack of political co-determination

Given that almost half the population in many of the countries in which COMUNDO operates is not entitled to vote or be elected, a minority of adults and older people determines what happens in

the country, and hence also the future of the younger generation. Depending on the context, this is referred to as "adultcentrism" (everything focused on the adult world) or "gerontocracy" (where the old men hold sway). Although these teenagers and young people generate a large part of the national wealth, they are excluded from political participation and deprived of a political voice. This in turn encourages nepotism (which is rife in any case), clientelism, corruption and oligarchic governments. The fact that the age of legal majority and retirement is practically the same or even higher than in the Global North - despite strikingly different age pyramids and life expectancy - is demotivating, and an obstacle to early political participation.

Although the age of legal majority varies worldwide between 14 (West Samoa) and 21 (e.g. Honduras or Namibia), it is 18 in all the countries in which COMUNDO operates. Marriageable age in some countries (Bolivia, Zambia, Philippines) is 21, which is entirely out of phase with the trend of early partnerships and having children seen in those same countries.

Political participation for young women is still the exception in many countries. Identification with the "old men" at the top is impossible for young women; their concerns attract little or no attention. Men are often still regarded as the political spokespersons for women. Given the frequent lack of education and early discontinuation of schooling (see B.), young women have only a very sketchy knowledge of democracy with little or no political awareness of their situation, or they are instrumentalised by their partners.

D. Drug consumption and drug trade

Given the precarious living conditions and latent violence in the societies of most COMUNDO countries, some form of drug consumption is very widespread amongst young people and even children. These drugs – alcohol above all, and glue-sniffing – serve as an escape from a joyless existence, which obviously does nothing to improve the situation but leads instead to a vicious circle of addiction, violence and petty crime. In the Philippines in particular, and notably since Duterte took office, children and young people increasingly suffer the consequences of a merciless war against drugs, even though they are mostly the victims of criminal groups and unscrupulous dealers, not the perpetrators.

In many economies in the COMUNDO countries, drug dealing now accounts for a substantial percentage of GDP and national wealth (Bolivia, Peru and Colombia, for example), which in turn weakens democracy and considerably increases the risk of a "narco-dictatorship". Drug consumption also causes great damage to health. Although the drugs in question are not usually "hard" drugs, "poor man's drugs" such as glue and petrol are incomparably more harmful than the "designer drugs" consumed by the elite in the Global South and North. Rampant alcoholism is a big problem in most COMUNDO countries. Even if children and young people do not consume the alcohol themselves, they suffer indirectly from the consequences of alcoholism amongst parents, relatives and friends. The outflow of financial resources leads to even greater poverty and misery, whilst excessive alcohol consumption is a trigger for domestic violence, sexual abuse and broken families. Children and young people are directly affected by these factors.

Young women often fall victim to drug dealers, whether as couriers (*mulas*), prostitutes for cartel members or as compliant sex playmates (K.O. drugs). Whilst drug dealing is largely managed by the men, women and female youngsters are often doubly impacted by consumption: as relatives of drug addicts (co-addiction) and as easy victims of dealers. Alcohol poses a particularly difficult problem: alcohol is a problem of pandemic proportions in many countries in which we operate, frequently entailing further hardship for women, e.g. domestic violence, sexual abuse and poverty.

E. Internal and external migration

Lack of educational opportunities and prospects in terms of worthwhile work lead to migration of children and young people, often unaccompanied by adults. The first step takes this group out of the countryside and into the towns ("rural exodus") in the hope of better education and training, although this frequently attracts even more difficulties (drugs, alcohol, squalor, lack of orientation, gang wars, crime). The second step takes them from a provincial town into a larger city, or even the capital. For many, internal migration does not offer a permanent long-term solution, prompting young people and older children to attempt to cross national boundaries. This puts them firmly on the side of illegality, with a high risk of falling victim to smugglers and "human traffickers". Nicaragua, Colombia and Bolivia in particular are affected by problems associated with "trafficking in minors" (*trato y tráfico de menores*), not infrequently in connection with trade in organs, prostitution, sexual abuse and slave-like working conditions. One particular form of migration is the

brain drain, meaning the loss of highly qualified young people who, despite having a university education, see no opportunity for integration in the labour market. The sums of money transmitted back home do not compensate for this loss of valuable knowledge and creative skill, even though these sums constitute an important source of revenue in many COMUNDO countries, alongside earnings from export goods. So, whilst the "export" of people, especially children and youngsters, due to education- and poverty-related migration – we call them "economic refugees" – certainly reduces demographic pressure, it also bleeds a country dry in terms of intellectual and innovative resources.

There are very few dependable figures on internal migration, but one may safely say that it is exceptionally high in all COMUNDO countries. In Colombia, the greatest problem in this respect is that of "displaced persons" (*desplazados/as*), i.e. persons who have had to leave the conflict zones created by the civil war to move to safer areas. In Nicaragua, migration is caused primarily by flight from the negative repercussions of climate change and the growing violence of youth gangs; in Peru and Bolivia, migration towards the big cities is driven by the growing lack of prospects for the rural population, but also, and increasingly frequently, by the unscrupulous activity of international companies in the mining and energy generation sectors (mega power stations). In Kenya, pressure is growing due to refugees arriving from Somalia and South Sudan, and in Zambia, better educational prospects for children in the city play a decisive role.

All the COMUNDO countries without exception have a negative migration rate (difference between emigrating and immigrating persons, calculated per 1000 of the population), meaning that more people leave these countries than enter (i.e. these countries are characterised by emigration):

Migration rates:

	Net migration rate (2007-2012)
Switzerland	+4.74
Bolivia	-6.04
Peru	-7.96
Colombia	-3.09
Nicaragua	-22.97
Kenya	-1.18
Zambia	-2.33
Philippines	-7.29

Nicaragua is striking in that, like other countries in the same region (El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala), it is affected by an extreme *brain drain* and migration towards the USA. Children and young people frequently fall victim to violence on the migration route from Central America to the USA via Mexico, known as the "Ruta de la muerte". In the Philippines, the figure is essentially made up of migrant workers who leave to work in precarious conditions in Hong Kong, Taiwan or on the Arabian Peninsula. Whereas negative net migration rates are extremely high in most African countries (Libya -79.84; Somalia -39.87; Sudan -21.21; Mali -18.77), Kenya and Zambia are almost "islands of the blessed" in this respect. One should note, however, that net emigration in Kenya is virtually balanced out by the high inflow of refugees from Somalia and South Sudan, which is why it appears to be so low. Until recently, this was also the case in Zambia, which had to accept many refugees from the Congo and Angola.

In Nicaragua, Bolivia and Colombia in particular, *remesas* (sums sent back to the country by emigrants) make up a substantial part of GDP. Youngsters often live off these funds sent back by one or both parents. That, plus absent parents, frequently encourages consumption of alcohol and drugs, investment in technological gadgets and gambling, with the result that studies and paid work tend to be neglected.

Whilst internal migration affects both sexes equally, women make up a large percentage of the migrants who travel to Europe or the USA, and are often forced to accept casual jobs and precarious employment out of economic necessity. Young women in particular are liable to fall victim to human trafficking and enforced prostitution. Whereas young men often find their situation improved by (forced) internal migration (training, work, respect), that of young women does not, or only does so to a below-average standard. Many female external migrants end up exploited,

doing housework and care duties in slave-like conditions. For young women from the Philippines, migration to Hong Kong, Singapore and the Arab Emirates is often a means of escaping extreme poverty; in most cases, however, they go from the frying pan into the fire and end up virtually unable to return home. (European) sex tourism and arranged marriages constitute a special case, from which not even underage Filipinas are safe.

F. Youth gangs and crime

Lack of a social network – intact family structures no longer exist in many COMUNDO countries – forces children and young people to look to youth gangs (known as "maras" in Central America) to provide a new family. Whilst this may make the battle to survive more bearable, and spreads the burden across more shoulders, it also means that young people find themselves sucked into a vicious circle of addiction, blackmail and violence from which there is frequently no escape. The consequence is a rising crime rate and a life spent operating underground, in jail or in open violence, with young people in constant danger of falling victim to a violent death.

In these circumstances, it is evident that (formal) schooling and vocational training fall by the wayside. Young people are naturally drawn to groups and movements which give a purpose to their life and open up new horizons, even if they are associated with a life of illegality, high propensity to commit violence and likelihood of suffering violence. This can lead to radicalisation, as in the context of Islamic jihadism, but also to an increasing spiral of violence, as seen in the Central American "maras" (*Salvatrucha* or *Barrio 18*), international drug dealing and even human trafficking. The COMUNDO countries have so far had very little to do with Islamic extremism (with the exception of areas of Mindanao in Indonesia and parts of Kenya, where the Somali al-Shabaab group holds sway); Nicaragua has thus far also been relatively successful in staying out of conflicts between youth gangs in El Salvador and Honduras. In the countries in which we operate (e.g. Nicaragua and Colombia), a growing number of children and young people are recruited by drug cartels or paramilitary groups for criminal activities. The issue of "child soldiers" is a problem in Colombia (at least until the guerrillas are definitively integrated in civil society) and Kenya (Al-Shabaab). This goes hand in hand with the issue of impunity, particularly when considering the re-integration of children and young people.

Every year, 200,000 children and young people aged between 10 and 29 are killed in violent circumstances around the world, accounting for 43% of all murders worldwide. Murder is the fourth largest cause of death in this age group, with 83% of victims being male. But for every murder, there are many others who suffer physical and psychological harm requiring medical and psychotherapeutic treatment. Sexual violence against girls and young women is particularly widespread; in certain countries, 23% of all women report that their first sexual experience is a violent one. In certain Latin American countries (Bolivia, Peru, Nicaragua), femicide (intentional killing of females because of their gender) remains a very virulent problem.

Amongst the factors which encourage violence amongst young people, both perpetrated and suffered, some are associated with the individual (early contact with alcohol and drugs; poor achievement at school; unemployment; violence in the family), some with relational frameworks (no family care; family breakdown; parents with addiction to drugs or alcohol; low family income; parental unemployment; influence of youth gangs) and some with society and the wider environment (access to alcohol, drugs and weapons; highly unequal distribution of wealth; poverty; low presence of the state, and hence of judicial bodies).

Crime rates (cases per 100,000 inhabitants) according to UNODC:

Period:	Violent crime overall	Murder	Rape	Drug-related criminal acts
2000-2006				
Bolivia	54.2	29	7.8	45
Peru	99.9	12	20.8	35
Colombia	63.4	79	4.7	53
Nicaragua	332.9	16	27.6	29
Kenya	35.9	21	3.5	16
Zambia	211.4	23	2.9	4
Philippines	226	8	3.0	6.4

Very little reliable data is available for the current period (2017), but the situation has changed dramatically in certain contexts such as the Philippines, for example, mainly due to Duterte's battle against drug dealing and consumption. Nicaragua appears to be the "least safe" COMUNDO country (looking at the violent crime rate in general), followed by the Philippines and Zambia. The probability of being murdered is highest in Colombia, and most rapes (expressed as a percentage) take place in Nicaragua and Peru. Drug-related crime is higher in Colombia than in Bolivia, although the Philippines have probably moved into first place by now. Young people and children are both victims and perpetrators, with gender being a very important factor. Some 80% of violent crime is committed by males, with that figure rising to pretty much 100% for rape. In Colombia, the murder rate has undoubtedly dropped due to the peace agreement, in the Philippines it has certainly increased dramatically since 2016.

The majority of members of most youth gangs, especially the "maras", are still male, but the potential for violence and the resultant loss of resources typically have a direct impact on women, especially girls and young women. These latter are the most frequent victims of crime, especially domestic, sexual and psychological violence. Youth crime is closely associated with drug trade, alcoholism, unemployment and lack of prospects; the machismo frequently found in Latin America exacerbates the gulf between the sexes. For many young women, physical and psychological violence is a "normal" part of their lives.

G. Identity/ies and forms of discrimination

In the Global North as in the Global South, the years between 15 and 25 are crucial in terms of forging and developing a sense of personal identity. This covers many aspects, including choice of profession, decision to start a family, sexual orientation, sense of ethnic and cultural belonging, groups and gang formation, political affiliation and religious-ideological tendencies. Whilst young people in the Global North enjoy a relatively long and protected period in which to shape their identity, most young people and children in the Global South enjoy no such period at all, or one that is far too short. Many decisions are defined by circumstances, rather than emerging from a process of reflection and experience. In the Global North, the issue of identity related rather to the individual and his or her character, whereas family, social and religious networks play a far greater role in the Global South.

In the Global South, professional choices are steered by actual employment opportunities and parental circumstances (children take over the father's workshop or the mother's market stall, and this is regarded as a very positive thing); furthermore, education is associated with financial opportunities, or lack of, so that certain career choices are discarded as unrealistic from the outset. The choices are disproportionately more limited than in most countries in the Global North, and practically non-existent in certain contexts. The same also applies – *mutatis mutandis* – with regard to choices about partnerships and when to start a family. Early pregnancies and parental pressure often "force" young people into starting families before they are ready to do so.

Sexual orientation constitutes a particular difficulty, given the open or latent homophobia found in most countries in which COMUNDO operates, whether due to dominant machismo or religious (Catholic) control of society and state (e.g. Nicaragua, Colombia, Philippines). Homosexuality is a criminal offence in 78 countries around the world, including 37 countries on the African continent alone. Homosexual acts are subject to the death sentence in five countries (Mauritania, Sudan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Yemen), and in certain areas of Nigeria and Somalia. Most countries apply jail sentences and financial penalties, e.g. Uganda. A 2013 study by the *International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)* reveals the existence of legislation criminalising homosexuality in 37 of the 54 African states. The legal texts often refer to "sodomy" rather than homosexuality, although the definitions vary.

In Kenya, homosexual acts between men are punishable by jail sentences of 5 to 14 years; homosexual acts between women do not attract punishment. In Zambia, homosexual acts by both sexes are punishable by law, and homosexuality is very much a taboo subject in general. Homosexual acts are not illegal in the Philippines, but neither is there any anti-discrimination law nor protection for sexual minorities. Nicaragua abolished the criminalisation of homosexual acts in 2008 but enacted an even more restrictive law on abortion rendering any type of interruption of pregnancy (even for medical reasons) a criminal offence. Colombia is probably the most liberal of the countries in which COMUNDO operates: same-sex marriages and adoption of children by

homosexual couples have been officially allowed since 2013. Peru abolished the criminalisation of homosexual acts in 1924, but society remains highly intolerant of homosexual couples. The new constitution adopted by Bolivia in 2009 provides protection for sexual orientation and a comprehensive anti-discrimination law came into force in 2010.

In recent years, the question of ethnic and cultural identity has become an increasingly important issue for young people in the countries in which we operate. The rural exodus creates difficulties for traditional (indigenous) identities, which are increasingly pressured by hybrid urban cultures and the temptations presented by (Western) media. On the other hand, we note a revival of conventional "traditional" cultures and ethnic identities in many locations, especially amongst young people (in Bolivia and Peru for example). Mostly, however, indigenous youngsters and children living in mixed-race and white contexts experience many forms of discrimination, be it due to lack of knowledge of the "official" national language(s), way of dressing, dietary habits, musical preferences and religious practices or attitudes.

Children and young people with a disability suffer a particular form of discrimination. In most countries in which COMUNDO works, they are still stigmatised and hidden, or even locked up, by their relatives. There are virtually no social safety nets to ensure a decent existence for those with a disability, let alone alternative education and training schemes. With very few exceptions, responsibility for looking after these people lies not with the state, but with civil NGOs and church institutions in particular.

Discrimination on the grounds of gender is apparent in all the aforementioned difficulties and problem areas. Women face double or triple the burden, have less access to resources and legal aid, have great difficulty taking part in political decision-making and co-determination, and are disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts in terms of education and training. Their identity is clearly defined and controlled by society and sometimes religious institutions. Pressure to conform to notions of a heteronormative family and conventional female roles is huge.

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