

## Youth Extremism Series, Paper 6: Resources Related to Youth Extremism and Prevention

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### Introduction

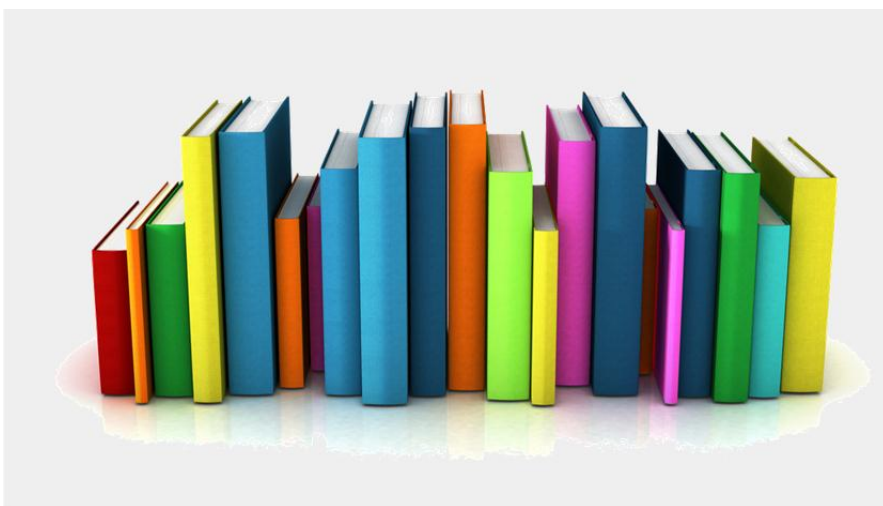
Creating an environment in which the active engagement of young people and their communities is commonplace is essential for high impact capacity building, global security, gender equality, equal access to education for all, and a host of personal and socioeconomic development outcomes. If ignored, this setting may likely signal a tipping point where failure to ensure youth engagement jeopardizes stable, civil societies worldwide. Most visible are issues of drug addiction, violence, early pregnancies, preventable disease, and most alarmingly, the increasing drift of disenfranchised youth to extremist and terrorist activities.

Beyond the individual and community level, youth engagement has national and global implications, particularly in fragile states. Youth engagement and development is a global security and stability issue, particularly in fragile states.

Youth's active engagement and contributions to local life is receiving increased attention from a variety of sectors. Through the work of the United Nations, UNESCO, UNICEF, and applied university research, a youth-focused agenda has emerged. Particular effort has

been placed in how to create environments where youth can openly express themselves, have avenues for relevant engagement, and receive emotional and tangible support from adults to develop skills necessary for active citizenship. These are the cornerstones and basis for countering extremism and decreasing youth recruitment to such organizations. This shift in how we view the role of young people also means that policy, research, and programming has also shifted. This positive development shift in viewing youth as capable actors in civic society means adults must challenge preconceived notions of youth's abilities and willingness to work as partners on improving social conditions. It calls on societies to be open to the engagement of young people as current contributors to society and not simply adults-in-waiting.

Youth engagement and related activities (community capacity building, youth-led research, social supports, and empathy development) are not all that there is to challenging the problem of extremism. They are, however, major factors that can have significant impacts and provide a clear logic for effective application. Our work and the work of our colleagues in various youth-focused international development sectors have demonstrated success in these areas. The wider research on youth programming shows societies are made better, more stable, and more secure when youth are active participants. Youth themselves are better off for being part of the process. Their engagement results in far stronger social, psychological, and developmental competencies, leading to adaptability, resilience, and a long list of positive developmental outcomes. Youth engagement is not the only part of the equation that will end extremism and terrorism, but it is an essential part nonetheless.



There are many resources useful for researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners interested in exploring this topic. The authors are students under Dr. Mark Brennan, UNESCO Chair in Community, Leadership and Youth Development, at Penn State University. The UNESCO Chair positions Dr. Brennan to advance policy and programmatic research into active recommendations to improve the integration of youth and community well-being. There are many initiatives supported through the network of UNESCO Chairs, and this informational factsheet will highlight key resources of relevance to those interested in understanding youth extremism and strategies for its prevention.

## Resources

### Extremism

A recent UNESCO Chairs white paper about youth extremism has summarized academic and practitioner knowledge about this topic and brings together best practices and bodies of knowledge that address youth development, digital media/communications, education, conflict mitigation, and community based solutions for countering youth extremism.

- <http://agsci.psu.edu/unesco/unesco-chairs-white-paper-on-youth-extremism/youth-led-pathways-from-extremism>

### Rural capacity-building and youth entrepreneurship

- <http://4-h.org/>
- <http://4-h.org/about/global-network/>

Heinert, S. & Roberts, T.G. (2016, March). Engaging rural youth in entrepreneurship through extracurricular and co-curricular systems. USAID/InnovATE. Retrieved from <http://innovate.oired.vt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/HeinertRobertsFINAL.pdf>

Mukembo, S.C. & Edwards, M.C. (2016, September). Project-based learning: Equipping youth with agripreneurship by linking secondary agricultural education to communities. USAID/InnovATE. Retrieved from <http://innovate.oired.vt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/MukemboProjectBasedLearning-FINALdocx.pdf>

### Youth engagement in community development

These two book chapters summarize the importance of involving youth in community development initiatives and for considering youth and community well-being as integrated.

Eissler, S., Brennan, M. & Larson, E. (2017). The centrality of community in achieving child and youth welfare. In P. Dolan & N. Frost (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of global child welfare* (pp. 59-74). New York, NY: Routledge.

Olson, B. & Brennan, M. (2016). From community engagement to community emergence: A conceptual framework and model to rethink youth-community interaction. In R. Phillips & B. McGrath (Eds.), *The comprehensive handbook for community development*. Taylor & Francis Publishers.

### Youth-led research

The Youth as Researchers program was developed by UNESCO Partner Dr. Patrick Dolan and Dr. Danielle Kennan from the National University of Ireland (NUI) in Galway. The program is a training manual and support system for youth organizations interested in engaging young people in social justice community-based research. The UNESCO program at Penn State has recently taken up this program to deliver it in the United States, and research is underway to assess and understand the impacts of involving youth in research for youth and community well-being.

- <http://agsci.psu.edu/unesco/our-programs/youth-as-researchers>
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The Youth as Researchers workbook for youth and training manual for adults can be found here:

- [http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescochildandfamilyresearchcentre/documentspdf/youth\\_as\\_researchers\\_workbook.pdf](http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescochildandfamilyresearchcentre/documentspdf/youth_as_researchers_workbook.pdf)
- [http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescochildandfamilyresearchcentre/documentspdf/youth\\_as\\_researchers\\_training\\_manual\\_2.pdf](http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescochildandfamilyresearchcentre/documentspdf/youth_as_researchers_training_manual_2.pdf)

Additionally, videos displaying the results youth have found from their Youth as Researchers projects can be found here:

- <http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/cfrc/youth-as-researchers/>

### Empathy development

Understanding the connection between empathy development and acts of compassion and activism have been a focus of interest for the UNESCO programs at Penn State and in NUI Galway. A recent talk by the two UNESCO Chairs from these universities, Dr. Mark Brennan and Dr. Patrick Dolan, highlights these connections and possibilities for future programming and future research

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2hqx\\_vv-Kg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2hqx_vv-Kg)

A recent thesis by Karim Batineh, a former Master's student of Dr. Mark Brennan's explored the emergence of empathy during a case study of NATO cadets interacting online with citizens of predominately Muslim communities. He connects the concept of empathy to community interaction, conflict resolution, and international development, demonstrating that empathy is more than a trait one possesses, but something that can be developed.

- <http://agsci.psu.edu/unesco/initiatives/could-empathy-lead-to-community-development-a-study-on-the-factors-shaping-and-maintaining-personal-empathy/final-report>



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