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**ABSTRACT**

**Title: Listen to me and respect me for who I am**

*Youth in transition: subjective well-being in Guatemala, South Africa, Kurdistan and Norway.*

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Over the course of the last century, the frontline in most of the world’s conflicts has moved from distant battlefields on the borders to the centre of social activity in towns and villages. Globally, just over 1 billion children under the age of 18 live in countries and territories affected by armed conflict. Many more live in situations of post-conflict still marked by violence and in risk of relapse, suffering from lack of healthcare, education and not having their basic needs met. Children and youth are important stakeholders in transitional justice processes, however seldom given enough attention from authorities. At the same time, all adolescents are all in a critical stage in their lives, in transition from childhood to adulthood, hoping and planning for the future regardless of conditions and context.

This paper will focus on how youth 15 – 18 years old in Guatemala, South Africa Northern Iraq and Norway perceive their wellbeing. What is important in their every- day life? What are their hopes and fears? What should be changed? What do they think is needed in order to have a good quality of life? Do youth living in regions of reconstruction and post-conflict have other expectations and experiences regarding individual well-being than those enjoying societal safety and a variety of possibilities in a welfare state?

Data is based on discussions with focus groups and individual answers from adolescents who in 2008 took part in an international project exploring roles, rights and responsibilities of youth in reconciliation, peace-building and conflict transformation processes. Answers from the youth are discussed related to theories on Quality of Life, local implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Millennium Development Goals as well in the perspective of culture, views on child-hood and present state of societal security and transition. (300)

**About the author:**

Researcher, lecturer and activists involved in child rights issues for more than 20 years, especially focusing on refugee children and migrants in Norway and internationally. Head of Redd Barna Child Right’s Program in Norway for 6 years (1990- 1996). Co-Director of Global Youth Peacebuilding Initiative 2006 – 2010, organized by the University of Stavanger where she has been working since 1996. Currently doing research on Quality of Life among youth in North Iraq, Kurdish region.