

Interview with

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IICBA: Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

I am Mugisha Annet Kajura from Uganda. I work as the Assistant Commissioner with the Ministry of Education and Sports. I am responsible for initial teacher training institutions. I am supposed to provide technical advice to both administrators and staff for field institutions that offer initial training.

IICBA: What are the most frequent types of conflicts or violence in your country, including risks of violent extremism? What are the main causes or drivers leading to conflict and violence, including violent extremism?

The most frequent types of conflicts and violence in Uganda include land disputes, school strikes, fires in schools and markets, rebel attacks, and terrorism. Land disputes tend to be the result of conflicts and disagreements among family members, especially after the loss of the head of the family. This in turn results in siblings and relatives of the deceased having conflict. For instance, a relative or a son or daughter of the deceased takes over the property and fails to look after the other children or pay school fees. This is common among siblings and in some cases other relatives of the deceased.

Separately, poor administration or poor communication in schools has caused strikes. They have occasionally left schools in disarray. Infrastructure has been destroyed, including even loss of lives and many other negative effects. These conflicts have in most cases arisen due to increased tuition or taxes in the case of the business



Background: This series of interviews was prepared for the International Day of Education on January 24 whose theme for 2024 is “learning for lasting peace”. As noted on UNESCO’s International Day of Education webpage, “the world is seeing a surge of violent conflicts paralleled by an alarming rise of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and hate speech. [...] An active commitment to peace is more urgent today than ever: Education is central to this endeavor, as underlined by the UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development. Learning for peace must be transformative, and help empower learners with the necessary knowledge, values, attitudes and skills and behaviors to become agents of peace in their communities.” This series of interviews builds on projects implemented by UNESCO IICBA on education for peace and the prevention of violent extremism with support from the Government of Japan.



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generally suffer more than boys and men. For instance, most girls that come from such families where there are challenges about land end up getting into early marriages because they have been denied education. In some communities, cases of mental health issues have increased due to unsettling conditions brought about by conflicts and violence.

IICBA: Does violence and conflicts affect schooling and learning in basic or higher education?

The violence and conflicts that take place in homes, institutions, or communities affect education at all levels, including the persons who were paying the tuition for students in schools or at the university who may get involved or affected. One may be directly or indirectly involved. One may simply be passing by and be injured or killed by a stray bullet or a mob. Students themselves may be injured or die even if they were not directly involved. When such conflicts happen in the community, the learning institution cannot operate for some time. There is displacement of students since they may fail to access the institution due to fear of being attacked. They also experience trauma, which has an effect on the time supposed to be spent on the intended curriculum. For instance, we have seen instances where schools have been closed and over 50 students lost their lives due to conflict. The surviving students experienced significant trauma, making it difficult for them to return to any school, even after some time.

IICBA: What do you think could be the role of education in promoting peace and preventing violence and conflicts?

The Ministry of Education and Sports plays a big role in preventing and minimizing the degree of violence and conflicts in the community. Creating a peaceful environment and peaceful communities should be part of the curriculum at all levels. The teachers should be at the center of this effort. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training should equip teachers with appropriate

community. Poor pedagogical strategies which make learning difficult for learners have also at times led them to engage in undesired activities. Some fires that have caused tragedy in schools may have also led to aggrieved individual students. Recently some terrorist attacks have also affected schools and led to loss of life.

IICBA: What are some of the effects on individuals, communities, and society at large? Does violence affect women and girls differently?

There are multiple effects on all stakeholders. For instance, if a family fights about the land, this results in hatred and fights that can lead to loss of lives. In other instances, the country may lose a service or taxes. In addition, violence and conflicts instill fear in the society and community affecting their output. In all these cases, girls and women





pedagogical skills. When the teachers are sensitized on how to support peaceful youth, they develop peace messages in all their lessons and sessions with learners, their parents, and even leaders. This creates a sustainable chain of peacebuilding.

IICBA: If you participated in a project of UNESCO IICBA, was this project helpful, and if so, how?

Yes, I participated in the UNESCO IICBA project. The training and materials were all helpful and they provided a lot of insights that promoted a peaceful youth generation. This was supported by teacher training and development sessions. The training had good activities that empowered the teachers to prepare interesting lessons and sessions for all stakeholders. It is important to note that the communities are regularly sensitized about the usefulness of having a violence-free community. Learners must be involved in such insightful sessions so that they know that they have support from the communities where they stay, both at school and outside the school.

IICBA: What does your organization or institution do today to promote peace and prevent conflicts and violence? What more could be done?

As I mentioned, I work with the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda. Strategies and interventions have been put in place to promote peace and prevent conflicts and violence. These include policies and implementation guidelines at different levels. We have recently launched a toolkit that has been developed to support adolescents in managing the challenges they face during the adolescent period. To reinforce this, training of teachers and parents has been put in place so that they are able to guide adolescents on how to use the toolkit. In this toolkit, each stakeholder has activities that have been designed to support adolescents so that they can successfully navigate through that difficult period. We also have a gender-responsive policy and a teacher incentive framework to reward the best teachers who go the extra mile in making schools a conducive environment for learners and parents,





a teacher dialogue, and the National Teacher Policy which recommends the development of the Teacher Council to regulate issues that relate to the teaching profession and give them an opportunity to air out their challenges instead of going on strike.

Teacher development related to peacebuilding and bringing up a violence-free youth is vital because there are still many teachers who did not get an opportunity to be trained. The issues of preventing violence and conflicts need to continue because as one group is equipped with the skills, another new group is coming. Support should be continuous, especially for training teachers. They must be innovative and creative while teaching and they must interact with learners. We also have an Education Response Plan 2022/25 which guides education in refugee camps and displaced communities. The government aims to support these interventions but has a constrained budget.

IICBA: Have you seen innovative initiatives to promote peace and prevent conflicts and violence? How did they work?

Innovative initiatives work quite very well since we are now dealing with a group that has grown up. If teachers are not innovative, learners may become innovative in a negative way. The initiatives that the ministry has embraced include training of teachers on inclusive pedagogy and active teaching and learning. The experience shows that such trainings yield positive

results. For instance, learners are involved in teaching preparations and engaged throughout the lessons.

IICBA: What are the main challenges today in implementing initiatives that promote peace and prevent conflicts and violence?

The main challenge is that the budget is constrained, yet there are many activities to be handled. The youth of today need good things but sometimes do not want to work. There is a disconnect between the 20th-century generation (teachers) and the 21st generation (learners). Continuous training for all stakeholders is critical. This demands a lot from teachers to handle today's learners.

IICBA: Finally, could you share with us an anecdote about yourself or your work?

I am forever indebted to UNESCO IICBA for the knowledge that I acquired on teacher issues and especially how to create a peaceful environment and reduce violence extremism and conflicts in the communities. The online webinars I attended have not only enhanced my knowledge on bringing up violence-free youth and communities, but also on how to participate and make online presentations. I have gotten opportunities to travel to different countries and thereafter to be useful to my country. I was able to visit Hiroshima in Japan where I got forever memories about the importance of being peaceful because it prevents one from causing forever pain in communities.



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