

Interview with

Tendayi Marovah

Teacher educator and researcher at
Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

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

My name is Tendayi Marovah. I am a teacher educator and researcher at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe.

IICBA: What are the most frequent types of conflicts or violence in your country, including risks of violent extremism?

The most common forms of violence experienced in Zimbabwe are clashes between groups or gangs of artisanal miners. This usually happens when in their quest for livelihood, a new rich mineral deposit is found in abandoned mines and at times in mines operated by private companies. The gangs will be fighting for the control of territories. This has happened in all mineral-rich areas such as in Matabeleland, Mashonaland Central, and Midlands Province, in part due to limited formal employment opportunities for the growing youth population. Over the years the government has allowed the artisanal miners to participate in this sector unregulated. Another form of conflict and violence over the years is political violence, both intra and inter-party violence. This often happens whenever elections draw close. Reports of political violence within the biggest political parties are often received as political players position themselves for political offices during their internal democratic processes. Inter-party politics is also experienced when contesting parties try to protect their strongholds. Young people are often recruited by powerful politicians to do their dirty work. Some have

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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even gone on to form terror groups such as Chipangano whose violent activities have been documented.

IICBA: What are the main causes or drivers leading to conflict and violence, including violent extremism?

The main drivers are limited economic opportunities among young people, greed, and faulty democratic processes within political parties. Some corrupt officers are fingered as being involved in engineering some of the syndicates and their activities, especially in mining activities. Young people are the most vulnerable group who are often recruited by contending parties either to defend their territories or political strongholds.

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

The violent clashes which usually happen affect both individuals and communities at large as many are either injured or killed. Though no exact figure can be given, it is known that there are people who die during clashes over control of mining territories or political grounds. Women just like any other desperate citizens for livelihoods are also found in the complex economic and political matrix. In the mining areas, they participate either as vendors selling food stuffs or as carriers of mining ore from the pits to the trucks. When clashes occur, women are the most vulnerable group as they suffer the loss of their commodities, may run away to safety without even getting paid, and at times are raped. A study by Tariro Youth Development Trust unpacks the nuances of experiences of women in this sector and how they are affected, noting that *“commercial sex workers, in particular, suffer from all forms of abuse at the hands of men, many*

of whom are drug abusers. Gold panners (Makorokoza) prey on teenage girls, using money and material things to lure them into having sex.” This often results in unwanted pregnancies or child marriages. Women remain the most vulnerable group given limited economic opportunities.

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

Violence and conflict indeed affect schooling and learning in both basic and higher education. The consequences of violence and conflict include reduced school attendance, lower academic performance, increased drop-out rates, and loss of human lives. Non-attendance and early school drop-out particularly affect girls.

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

Education plays a central role in promoting peace and preventing violence and conflicts especially if the curriculum is strategically packaged and operationalised to achieve this. It is equally true that education can play a damaging role in peace and conflict prevention if it is not well structured and operationalized. If education is to play a positive role, it should be packaged in a way that it develops and fosters values, skills, and attitudes which we can call competencies, enabling learners to deal with challenges they encounter in their everyday lives. The thrust of this educational package should be to enable learners to apply knowledge acquired to solving problems rather than just learning for its own sake. The idea is to form graduate citizens who are responsible, ethical, and accountable. Such citizens respect diversity and are conscious of their duty to actively participate in the affairs of their polity and beyond whilst at the same time advancing democratic values to transform their society.

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

I participated in several UNESCO IIBA projects which have enriched my understanding of transformative pedagogy and how it can be operationalised in various contexts, including the school system, teacher education, and the university system. This has laid the foundation for my other works, including with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) Peace and Reconciliation Challenge Grant 2020 project entitled “Capacity building on transformative pedagogy for institutional reform, reconciliation and indigenisation for sustainable peace in Zimbabwe” and the 2023-24 Rotary Peace Fellowship through which I am working on a social change initiative called “Capacity Building for youth on peace-building and prevention of violence in Mutare, Zimbabwe.”

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

Midlands State University is involved in several activities and programs that promote peace and prevent conflict and violence. For example, in terms of academic programs, it has recently added peace and security under the Department of Peace Studies. The Department offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees that empower students to have a critical understanding and analysis of the root causes of conflicts and violence in diverse local, national, and global contexts. The Department also mobilises the university in celebration of the International Day of Peace and World Peace Day. The Gender Institute also offers Gender Studies across the university and mobilizes the university to participate in campaigns and programs advocating for the end of GBV. Every first Friday of the month the university participates in a national event for cleaning the environment. This helps to sensitize the university community to the need to keep our environment clean and be at peace with the environment.

IICBA: What is your government doing today to promote peace and prevent conflicts and violence? What more could be done?

The government has put in place several institutions to help shape and steer peacebuilding initiatives. They include the Peace and Reconciliation Commission, the Gender Commission, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission. It is my submission that these institutions, if properly empowered, will go a long way in contributing towards positive peace.

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

My recent 2023-24 Rotary Peace Fellowship stint at Makerere University has exposed me to several innovative initiatives to promote peace and prevent conflicts and violence in Uganda and Rwanda. One initiative is active in the Muhokya community camp for Internally Displaced People. Over 1,068 flood-affected persons spent more than two years in the camp on Muhokya Town Council land after floods ravaged the lowland areas of the district in 2020 and 2021. From the sources at the camp, more than 100 of the affected households are headed by women. This temporary settlement does not have proper facilities for a decent life, such as privacy and integrity. A second Initiative is CAFOMI, an acronym for Care and Assistance for Forced Migrants. It is a national non-governmental organization with legal status. Its vision is to see forced migrants (refugees) live dignified lives to acceptable international standards and positively contribute to the development among their host community. A third initiative is The AIDS Support Organisation (TASO) formed by a group of volunteers. TASO formed the first support group for people living with HIV and AIDS in Uganda at the Mulago Major Referral Hospital in Kampala. Some of the volunteers were infected while others had lost friends and family to AIDS. At the time information about HIV and AIDS was scanty and stigmatisation was rife. Individuals engaged in all these



various initiatives have tried to improve living conditions, contributing to positive peace.

IICBA: What are the main challenges today to implement initiatives to promote peace and prevent conflicts and violence?

The major challenge in implementing initiatives to promote peace and prevent conflicts and violence relates to funding. There is too much reliance on donor funding, which is not sustainable. Most of the initiatives suffer from still birth once funders withdraw. There is a need to mobilise local funding to ensure programs are not run as a one-off activity.

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

My commitment to peace and international development goes back to 1998 when I started my teaching career in hard-to-reach and often marginalized communities. It was in a context of contested democratic space when our country decided to implement controversial social, economic, and political reforms. I have over 20 years teaching experience in schools and teacher education specializing in history and citizenship education. At the time a form of history known as 'patriotic history' was promoted in schools and institutions of higher learning. This stifled critical thinking and often divided citizens into patriots and sell outs. This was against the values of critical pedagogy and the spirit of Ubuntu I had learnt during my teacher training. In response to this, I started developing ideas around a form of teaching that would promote social justice and human development understood as provision of choices to do and be what citizens reasonably value. I became a specialist in Africa studies broadly and

specifically in curriculum and pedagogical issues focusing on history, history education, and citizenship education and how these advance social justice and sustainable development for peaceful societies. I have been involved in reviewing curricula in schools, teacher education institutions, and adult education programs. My major drive in this exercise was to promote forms of teaching and learning contributing to values, attitudes, and skills required for advancing quality education as espoused in SDG 4.

In addition, I have gained sound knowledge and experience in working with UNESCO IICBA initiatives in transformative pedagogy, and GCED in the context of teacher development in Zimbabwe and other African countries with a focus on peace, resilience building, and the prevention of violent extremism. I have also worked as a focal person coordinating capacity building workshops for transformative pedagogy in teacher education institutions in Zimbabwe. This experience in transformative pedagogy for peace emanates from the work I have been involved with over the years. My most recent work in peace is through the Rotary Peace Fellowship 2023-2024 that I mentioned earlier.

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