

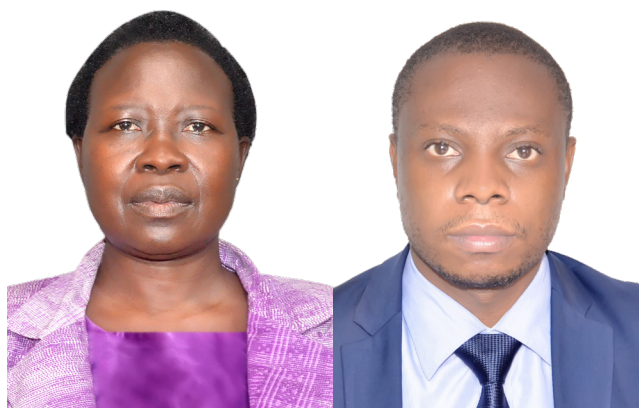
Interview with **Josephine Esaete and Edward Kansiime**

Academic staff, School of Education,
Makerere University, Uganda

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

Our names are Josephine Esaete and Edward Kansiime. We are both academic staff at Makerere University, School of Education Department of Science, Technical and Vocational Education, in Uganda.

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

The most frequent types of conflicts in Uganda are related to resources such as land. Land grabbing is common in areas of nomadic pastoralists in the Acholi sub-region. In the Buganda region, land grabbing by privileged rich people is also common and a source of conflict. Attacks by rebels in communities and schools are another form of violence, with the most recent being an attack by rebels in Kamwenge and Kasese districts. Domestic violence against women, girls, and children is also common in urban, rural, and remote areas such as Karamoja. Since the country has over 52 ethnic groups, inter-tribal conflicts sometimes occur as some tribes feel marginalized, leading to tension which ultimately leads to conflict.

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

The main causes or drivers include shrinking or limited land which cannot accommodate the high growth of the population in Uganda and some socio-cultural factors associated with stereotypes that

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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discriminate against people of other tribes as being primitive. Religious indoctrination also takes place whereby some members of the community believe to have power over what happens in the lives of their followers who end up just following what they tell them. Poverty and lack of education which leave some community members as easy prey for manipulation by self-seekers are other drivers of conflict and tension.

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

At the individual level, death, emotional, or psychological torture, and loss of property are commonly seen. Broken social networks due to displacement and migration and eventually loss of identity are other effects on the community. For example, the Batwa now have no language of their own as they speak the language of the community where they settled. When societies or groups lose resources, they cannot solve their problem and their resilience is decreasing.

Women, girls, and children are the most vulnerable groups who often suffer more than all other members of the community due to historical injustices arising from social norms that often have no provisions to protect them. For example, women and girls may be raped and forced into marriages by extremists in conflict areas. Women and girls also take the burden of looking after the family after the men have been killed or have run away to seek safety.

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

Violence affects schooling and learning both in basic and higher education. Schools are often targeted by conflicting parties who abduct learners and teachers as hostages. Education is also used by oppositions as an environment for indoctrination. During conflicts, schools are often turned into camps where refugees and displaced people seek shelter. Once communities are displaced,

they place an extra burden on host community schools which get overstretched, hence compromising education standards.

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

Using transformative pedagogy can help to promote coexistence among learners and appreciation of each other regardless of differences. It supports the creation of critical thinkers who question their beliefs and reflect on their actions. In most cases, the causes of violent extremism are deeply formed metacognitive thoughts shaped by childhood exposures and social encounters that influence one's philosophical and psychological predispositions, sets of knowledge, beliefs, values, and feelings towards different aspects of other ethnic groups. These fuels of violent extremism may be present in multi-ethnic schools and at times are unconsciously fueled by teachers (Ampumuza et al., 2020). To diffuse such frames of reference, education that utilizes transformative pedagogy can make learners interpret and reinterpret their senses as they get new knowledge and skills that are evaluated against their past ideas and understanding, thus causing a shift in their very worldview as they obtain new information through critical reflection. This can lead to increased empathy and tolerance which reduces the likelihood of conflict through misunderstanding or ignorance.

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

We carried out peace education (PE) activities for university youth and youth in refugee camps. For university youth, two workshops were held. The first was held in August 2022 at Muni University for both Muni University and National Teacher Training College (NTC) Muni student leaders with 94 student participants and 21 staff members. During the workshop, the PE and prevention of violent extremism (PVE) committees of NTC Muni and Muni University were formed.

Later, these committees held several planning meetings for the identification and development of messages in talking compound signposts and posters. Student leaders also participated in the identification of relevant locations and placement of posters in the compounds of the two institutions. The second workshop was held in collaboration with three university youths, two of them refugees from Sudan and South Sudan. The workshop was held in July 2022 at the International University of East Africa and attended by 120 university guild leaders from 13 universities. During the workshop, the youth identified divers of violence in universities. As a result, some youth wrote proposals on addressing inter-tribal conflict within university campuses where youth from different regions are together but are not interested in associating with others. A key result is that the guild leadership of the 12 universities integrated PE and PVE in freshmen's orientation programs and incorporated training on dialogue, mediation, tolerance, and conflict resolution.

In addition, in May 2022, we held another training with 57 youth leaders of Rhino Refugee camp under the theme "Youth Empowerment for Peace and Resilience Building for Prevention of Violent Extremism in Uganda and South Sudan." The youth leaders came from six Ofua villages. Through role-play, they brainstormed and showcased the causes of conflicts in the refugee settlements, including poverty, early pregnancies and marriages, and scarcity of natural resources like land and firewood that also breed conflicts with host communities. Following the training, they formed peace committees and organized sports galas between different South Sudanese groups in the camp. They latter drew workplans for their respective villages to mitigate conflicts and promote peace.

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

We support student initiatives, for example, a "keep our environment clean" activity that not only resulted in cleaning exercises but also raised awareness and

provided an avenue for interaction among different ethnic groups for a common goal. The university also revisited guidelines for guild elections as this is one area where student violence emerged. Talking compounds with peace messages at NTC Muni and Muni University were erected. The orientation of the students' guild on peaceful resolution of conflict by the outgoing guild leadership was another worthy effort.

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

There is often a deployment of the army and police whenever violence is anticipated. Installing security lights in some spots in town and nearby centers, such as surveillance cameras, would be useful. There is also the recruitment of local defense units for example for Karamoja and western Uganda.

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

One of the initiatives is transformative pedagogy to encourage a questioning mind for learners and teachers so that they can seek information about what they take for granted before making a decision. This empowers them to be independent thinkers, not just followers. At Muni University, which is in a region with many refugees and where learners live in an environment where they interact with many cultures at times contradictory to their own beliefs, we have courses in peace education. We also aim to produce a cadre of teachers who can question their beliefs against other peoples' beliefs and build a culture of tolerance. Memorials are organized to commemorate past massacres, using the past to shape the future and avoid similar mistakes. Memories of past experiences both positive and negative can serve as a learning tool for individuals and society because they help people to adapt to new situations and avoid repeating mistakes. Memories of past events can elicit strong emotions that shape one's



perspective, motivation, and aspirations. This includes negative memories which can instigate caution or change in behavior.

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

For schools, the curriculum is overloaded, so there are no resources allocated for the implementation of peace programs. There is also a lack of political will to champion courses on the promotion of peace among citizens. Intentional integration of transformative pedagogy in teacher training is also limited.

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

As we mentioned before, we integrated PE and PVE into work with youth leaders in universities and refugee camps. These two different clusters of intervention sites were chosen because universities are characterized by high levels of conflicts with rampart student and staff strikes, while in Rhino refugee camp, different ethnic groups don't meet eye to eye because of conflict and prejudices they have carried along from their home country and even perpetuated into the children from the camps. The Dinka and the Nuer especially blame each other as being the cause of the other's suffering. So, youth leaders from the two distinct interventions were targeted and trained using transformative pedagogy to help them develop competencies to question their own beliefs, prejudices, and resentment against other members of the same society, which sometimes happens unconsciously. The

youth leaders were prepared to be change agents and they made workplans which they later implemented in their respective universities and refugee camp villages. For example, at the universities, the guild leadership incorporated discussions on peace and conflict resolution during orientation programs for students joining the university. They rallied behind management to convince students to accept making online guild elections. For us personally, these are steps that are very encouraging and motivate us to continue this work.



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