

## Session 1. Peace Education

# Women's Peace Education: Importance et Opportunities

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Welcome, everyone to the International Women's Peace Conference.

I am the Secretary General of the National Commission of Mali for UNESCO, an affiliated organization of the United Nations that focuses on science and education. I am very honored to be here to discuss women's peace education.

War, chaos, and violence has always existed on the face of this earth, and ever since the global pandemic, women and other vulnerable groups have suffered from even severe violence in the midst of global crisis. Those who have witnessed violence while growing up in a violent environment are easily harmed both emotionally and physically. This suppression hinders the learning capabilities and social productivity of women and girls. This is why we must build peace and prevent conflicts through women's peace education.

The Constitution of UNESCO clearly states the purpose of peace education in the first sentence. It starts with "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." Thus, peace starts in the minds of people. Political, economic agreements and treaties between states can only bring peace temporarily. For eternal peace, we need an intellectual, moral foundation on which we must build mutual understanding and knowledge. UNESCO is clearly aware of this.

Johan Galtung, the pioneer of peace education, has said that 3 things, peace education, peace research, and peace activism, must come together to continue to fight against social evil and break through the status quo and reach social change. Peace education is an important element that changes a culture of violence to a culture of peace.

Mali has been going through a period of instability and conflict since 2012, culminating in the occupation of the north by armed groups. Mali is about twice as big as France. Its capital Bamako counts 2,929,373 inhabitants in 2023 due to the insecurity that has caused the population to move from the north to the south and mainly to the capital (375,000 displaced people in Mali).

This context is underpinned by a number of factors, including: the poor understanding of the Peace Agreement by a significant proportion of the population, including women and young people. The extremist influence, the weak presence of the State over a large part of the national territory (the north and central part), the rancor and wounds of previous conflicts, problems of governance, the low level of implication of young people and women in the process of finding appropriate solutions, among others.

In a context of generalized insecurity caused by a multitude of crises of various dimensions, characterized by terrorist assaults, which are armed robberies and trafficking of all kinds, fueled by the proliferation of weapons of all calibers over almost 2/3 of the country.

All of this significantly impact women and hinder national development.

We are fighting to eradicate poverty and conflicts, protect the earth, and guarantee prosperity of mankind.

In aid of the Malian government's peace education project, FEMACAU has organized educational modules on the culture of peace, social cohesion and conviviality, with the aim of teaching the notions of peace, civic-mindedness and conviviality on a wider scale to young people aged 10 to 20 and community leaders in the commune of Nossombougou, Koulikoro region: 250 young people, including 127 boys and 123 girls, 26 community and religious leaders (mostly men, including village chiefs and their advisors, imams and their staffs) and 4 master theater trainers are trained and equipped in themes linked to social cohesion, cohabitation, non-violent conflict management, the culture of peace, solidarity and so on. 185 home visits were carried out by 5 groups of 50 people (127 boys and 123 girls), reaching 1,199 people. 16 causerie debates and more than a dozen community dialogues were organized with young people and community leaders, at the rate of two talks per weekend in the villages. Micro-projects carried out in the northern regions produce concrete results for the population and defuse local conflicts.

So, this is why we believe that peace education should be part of the national education curriculum. Peace Education has the potential to ultimately change society. Now the youth can embrace new knowledge that includes historical perspectives on the origin of war, ways to prevent war, evolution toward research on violence in all forms, ways to prevent war and mitigate conflicts, and much more. This can help facilitate passion and dedication to peace at an individual and collective level.

For this peace to spread, NGOs such as HWPL, IWPG, and IPYG, and civil society and peace education in the community level is needed.

We must develop a strong peace education program that facilitates a peaceful, just, and sustainable society that guarantees a bright future for the future generation.

In particular, to root out the fundamental cause of various forms of structural violence against women and girls, peace education must be at the foundation.

Thus, simply “a world without war” is not enough. We must understand that peace means “a state of justice, equality, and partiality, where everyone enjoys dignity and respect,” and must work toward that goal.

Thank you very much.

