

EPISODE 2: Dr. Tina Davis Interviews Victor Ochen

TINA:

My name is Dr. Tina Davis. I am the Assistant Editor for The Journal of Modern Slavery, and the host for this podcast series. Today I want to welcome Victor Ochen, who's the founder and executive director of AYINET in Uganda. He is a peace builder, peace activist and mediator. Victor is also a UN Goodwill Ambassador for peace and justice promoting

Sustainable Development Goals 16 and he's also the member of the global advisory group of the UNHCR on gender force displacement protection. And Victor is from a town called Lira in northern Uganda. On this podcast we're talking about different issues linked to modern slavery and issues that are crossing that area, and in the area of conflict, many people end up being exploited in different ways as migrant child soldiers, and so forth. But first, I want to let you tell us a little bit about your background.

VICTOR:

Thank you so much once again, and I am very delighted with the subject we're talking about today the modern slavery be part of it. Is that what modern the word slavery which you for generations we have had and learned and, you know, we continue to experience one way or another. That area, which you people probably felt a bit lost is when you talk it, you call it modern slavery. And that's where people wonder, do we still have to see what happened 200 years ago, happening today? Are we seeing that or we are being just crazy? So but to get a bit where I'm coming from, that's where to talk about whether slavery that existed 200 years ago, is still ongoing today. I was born in northern Uganda, in the district called Lira. And in northern Uganda, this is the region of the country that has been through conflict for so many years. And in so many ways, we were not knowing what life looks like other than the life of conflict. Myself I was born in during the time when my country was going through very severe different types of war. Growing up in the region, I was born and raised in conflict with all the baggage that comes along with conflict. That includes severe physical losses, and you're losing family



members and losing properties, you're losing your dignity, you're losing the future as well. But above all, the abduction and recruitment or conscription of children to become sex slaves. Child wives or child marriages, forced marriages and kids were being raped by adult perpetrators. And we saw so many people being abducted and forcefully recruited to become armed fighters on both sides of the of the HMI. So this is what we saw what we learned that in addition to killing abduction and all this kind of thing. We're seeing kids were being forced to do everything against their will. You are taken from your parents and you. you're forced to become a soldier. you're forced to kill your family members so that you have no emotional reason to want to come back home. So in sort , growing up in northern Uganda, I grew up in a community where as a child, I was afraid. I was afraid for my life I was afraid for if I would ever eat the day or the next day, and I was afraid if my parents were struggling to get us water would not be taken away from me. And it's the same environment that our parents were afraid that the children who have labored to take care of them to treat them to feed them will not be taken away from them. So it was a comment of fear of being forcefully taken away from one another, parents afraid that kids will be taken away from them. And kids were afraid that parents would be taken away from them. So it was an environment of fear as a result of conflict, that includes forceful displacement from home, but also forceful abduction, and forcing your very own to create an enormous amount of damages on you so that you are kind of torn apart the relationship between you and your child is broken. So it was an environment of force labor, force abduction, forced conscription and forced displacement.

TINA:

In your area, it was the Lord's Resistance Army that was the rebel group that was fighting the government army. And so you and your family was displaced, as you said, Where were you displaced? And how was the life being in displacement for you?

VICTOR:

Yes, it is true that we In Northern Uganda, we had, among the many several fighting forces was the Lord Resistance Army, which was the most vicious. But there was several other rebel groups fighting against the government, what among themselves in the same community, but the LRA the Lord Resistance Army, was the most vicious one that contributed to the displacement of over 3 million people. And for a period of over 20 years in northern Uganda, so my entire childhood wasn't this kind of reality, was born in this environment. I grew up in this

environment. I was displaced always from my home to another community to another to join live another camp, were displaced across the district dispersed across two regions. So for me, I grew up rotating, moving from one camp to another camp with my family. Sometimes we would separate what would separate us from our families, then you are on your own. And again, if you're lucky, you reconnect with your family members, but majority of people were never able to reconnect because they lost their family members in the process. So, life in this kind of environment was was tough. You know, all we saw was a childhood ruins. It was the future threatened. From the very beginning, we knew we will never make it anywhere because every single day we were struggling to stay alive. We were struggling to not be killed by the planted landmines. The attacks and our arms being banned by the rebels. Were surviving every day from being abducted to be recruited as child soldiers are being forced to do our commit crimes. And we saw that we want no future because for you to have a future you need to study you need to be healthy you need to have where to sleep. And this is what we didn't have. We didn't have schools were all bound down, teacher were not there. We struggled to ever even one time when we started schooling and then war spent five years were displaced. As a child. I wanted to study to become a doctor, I wanted to start to become a pilot or an engineer, that when war came, everything turned around. So it demand that our future threatened from the very, very beginning. And then came in the issues of health. Well growing in the midst of A V, disease, you know, natural disasters, diseases are there, there are so many, you know, sicknesses, from measles, to malaria to, to polio to meningitis, a lot of things, a lot of infection was happening and kids were dying like crazy. So it would be a very good opportunity that you could grow up as a child in this environment, and surviving all these diseases. It was tight. It was a very big loss and too many parents The children became burdens because parents had responsibility to feed them and to care for them medically but which the parents didn't have means. And too many parents, this was a big, by the end of the big burden to the community. This is on the health side and on the shelter side as a child, you need to protect it. But you have nowhere to sleep, you're sleeping in the bush. And as a child, to be honest, the only time I felt safe enough, was when my mother would I mean, the bush she covers me with the grasses. And she tells me that please be there yourself. Nothing will happen to you. Even if they're firing bullets over you You deserve. That was the only moment I felt safe in my entire childhood. I never trusted I I had the government who could protect us and also is true that all these things were happening at the presence of full capacity of the government forces but when we're in protecting, so we had The question again and again, who was responsible for making us safe, other than our parents, we lost dropping our government, we lost our security forces. And we didn't understand why. It was not a priority for them to protect us.

TINA:

I remember the first time we met it was in 2010, in South Africa. And I particularly remember a moment when you were at we were both at the man up summit, you were there as a participant, and I was there as if it's facilitator and I was screening my documentary called modern slavery. And I remember the cinema to get there. And I didn't know this at the time. But one of the stories in the film I did was from Northern Uganda, and it was about child soldiers who had been abducted by the LRA. And I remember there was a point in the film, where you just grabbed my hand and you held it very tight to the end of the film. And then the next day you told me your personal story about how you had lost a family member who had been abducted as a child soldier.

VICTOR:

It is true. Yes. That was 2010 during the World Cup, we were having the campaign on engaging youth in gender protection and promotion rights of women. Yeah, that was a very powerful moment because you were screening. Life I grew up in. I held your hand when you were screening that because you had documented. The life I lived for years and years. And there's toys in the end the video was my difficult life story. And the reality which were reflected in the video was definitely what I saw every single day. And I felt that at some point when you talked about kids were being abducted or missing. I think by then you have not yet known that my own brother was taken and he was abducted and you'll never come back by then. And that's why it became too personal to me. I realized that at the moment at some point that situation that is it becomes you is never about the story is never about the there was such a documentary is about you, in the audience, you watching and that's the moment I felt I was I was there. I was in the reality of what I was living my reality of day to day life in northern Uganda and also, you know, some times it's it's so dark that you don't see anything. Because you look at the distance you have traveled. I first of all, I was happy to be in South Africa because majority of my eight mates never made it to the level I did. They lost everything to Hale, we lost them to Hale it was separated from their families, and the Hales taking away. And sometimes I feel like you know, while I'm in some communities and probably enjoying life, and seeing how the good part of the world looks like, I reflect home, how we are living the total opposite of what life should look like. So maybe in South Africa, meeting people come from different communities. You could tell that is a society thriving. I was from Northern Uganda, which was a society under destruction. So it became so much personal reality at the it is reflected it gave me

opportunity to think again and again that I moved it a long distance to where I am. But what about my friends? Imagine if we all moved together to where we are today. A lot of people, a lot of parents are to sacrifice to my so that children could leave. And a lot of children had to sacrifice their life so that they couldn't cooperate with being forced to torture or destroy or kill their parents. So three, this was about the mites on by every vulnerable person. But in life there's a moment when you are just too powerless to protect your own and that moment is when especially when you are when a loved one is taken away from you. For the purpose known to people want to take them away. That is the most powerful moment the moment when you cannot protect your home. A child cannot protect the parents and the parents can't protect that lovely Children from being taken away from them. It's the most inhuman moment you can ever go through that when you are powerless to say no, or to protect that, that's when you become so weak. I was weak when I held your hand tight. I was I was frightened because I saw me in the video. And so I was reminded of what I was living the life I was going through all the time.

TINA:

The reason why I brought up that was because I wanted to talk a little bit about you shared how you lost your brother who was adopted as a child, soldier and, what has happened to a lot of the kids not just in northern Uganda, but in many countries where children are being used in in warfare and conflict. You know, some will not come back, but there are the ones who do come back. What has happened with the children who have come back and who have been reintegrated into society.

VICTOR:

Oh yes, it's true. A lot of kids were taken from Northern Uganda. And according to UNICEF, and simply children study, about at least 66,000 children were taken from Northern Uganda. And this happened for long period of time. And if there is a community that feel betrayed by international communities that the population of Northern Uganda because if this happened for a year or a month, you'd say the government was taken unaware. If it had been for a year, you could say the government is struggling to cope up with the reality. and international communities are still assembling their capacity to come and intervene. But if it happened for two years, you feel somebody has failed you. And it went on to become five years to 10 years to 15 years. 20 years. The world is watching. Millions are displaced, close to millions are killed already, or millions already died as a result of war lifted. I injustices and then nearly 100,000 kids are being taken and re cruited as child soldiers. We have seen in the world where if an hostage taking up in the hotel, the

whole world freaks we have seen it happen all over the world in big cities, big capital. I know stage taking of hundred people. 50 people, their whole world freaks international media communities with all their energy behind. But we saw I was taking close to 100,000 people were abducted. Second, a second hostage rescue can become child soldiers. Nobody rescued them. sex slaves,, we saw it became the largest community of researchers were to such as come to get knowledge and all this kind of thing. So a lot pain, and few came back less than a half came back. And more than half of us that the 5000 people have never been accounted for. And the question is, where as they the traces of the history we also made so that some kids were taken and channeled through Sudan then was there was a tension between Uganda and Sudan and ended up as slaves. In the Middle East, or in some of the warring communities in around the world, some were sold in action of guns, in action of weapons, in action of goods, food, medications, and some were forced to work as combatants in the battles. So this way I did not understand that it will fail so betrayed by everybody. So well, some came back, of course, as I said,, torn apart by war war took too long, and everything got destroyed. The social fabric of this of the society, economy, health, education, infrastructure, no roads, no housing, no hope. This was the community that went through. So these kids were brought back home in a very drastic condition, and they entered into the cobwebs of poverty and in the midst of the deficiency of injustice, that's community's been slow. And you know, it was like there that jumping from a boat sinking, but you know, another broken boats and chances have become so chances are to become so you know, tiny for them to make it they had to struggle and a lot of them came into the community without anything. And in so many ways. A lot of people in the community look at it as a very scary move. Because majority of them went and all they were taught to kill, destroy, abuse, disrespect, and that's all the kids knew. So it became a very scary time. But of course as a human being despite the terrible experience, terrible account of their life, you want them back we wanted our people back, no matter how bad they were. We feel so sad that we lost him and I my father because my brother was abducted and come back. And my father sometimes just decide to refuse to eat. said I've been eating, expecting my son to come and join me but he cannot. The thing is, maybe I stayed for a week without food, babies crying for nobody was listening to him. I wish I could do anything. So the depressing feeling is when you imagine that I am here eating food and living some food, enjoying and happy. But what about my brother who could have maybe he has not slept for many days? Or did he lose his hand he lose his is eyes.. What happened? Nobody knows. So people have come back home they've been through reintegration processes. But also the challenge was when the international community realized there was war in northern Uganda after all the twenty years then there was a swamp of international humanitarian intervention. Unfortunately,

this united intervention. They did good job in one way or another. But had they use the resources properly, the North would have been rehabilitated rebuild, and recovery supported. But it became the largest humanitarian ground where is easy to access money from anywhere in the world. Because the world is passionate about the children. The world is passionate about child soldiers, and they were pouring money to every civil society international work. I mean, so much money came to Northern Uganda in the name of supporting recovery, re-integration, but most of the money went back to never be made. So yes, those who have gone back to school were taken to channel reception. And kids were given to admit that they were fighting against government or given amnesty, even though which is against international law and they went to the community to their families, who were just so poor. Poverty, they feel discriminated. They feel disregarded. And that's why it became so difficult for people to fully recover. Although they're trying to continue to do that, that's that's one area which we have been working a lot to support, emotional and physical and, you know, social recovery in the society, as well from among the young people who have been through this darkness of war and suffering. It is so difficult for something good to come out of a life that has been through critical areas of conflict.

TINA:

So, can I ask you what made you the peace builder that you are today Victor, because you have chosen to dedicate your life and through AYINET which you established very young back in 2004. And you work for so many years with The young people in your community to build to rebuild, and not just in northern Uganda, but your work is also spreading out across Africa and internationally. What drove you to go in that direction?

VICTOR:

Yeah, what drove me to choose peace even though when I, when I went through the west to the west and live through conflict, I do believe that when bad things happens, I think good, great, good should follow. And also, when you when you replace pain with with hope, it takes a very bold decision to to make sure that you are going to let go some other feelings. My own intention was I wondered why were we suffering? Why did you have to go through all these kind of things and then This simple answer was war. And I said okay, this is the bumpiest moment to make decision. How I make decision now will matter if I chose to fight like another person, I will, I will have chosen to escalate war. But if I chose to, to be peaceful, I will have chosen to end war. So to me the whole motive was how do we

diffuse the motives of rebellion which was clouding every community space that we had. Everyone was growing up, knowing that we are going through rebellion we have to prepare to work. So this is when things are the bush that could have been used for productivity became a space for waging guerrilla wars. And it became a space to launch suffering in homes in the community.

TINA:

So because a lot of your peers from what I know, they didn't choose the path that you chose, right, because there's a perpetuation of what they had seen in fighting and so forth.

VICTOR:

Yeah, it's true. A lot of a lot of people chose to, to say, I am not going to sit back and watch and be killed. I also want to do something I want to share the pain. I completely understand that fear I can I even when I was when I was I was feeling for them. I say, it's very difficult to be peaceful. When you are being attacked, you're being beaten, you're being tortured. But you know, at the end of the day, you need to agree to the fact that yes, we can, we can, we can all fight and kill and destroy one another. Or we can also make an effort to do it differently. So it was a very unpopular move to talk about non violence. Because all that we were experiencing was violence. It was totally insane to talk about peace, yet communities well, so and only experience in conflict. So it was a very strong decision, a very bold, unpopular move to say that I'm not going to accept to claim up the conflict, but I want to bring an end to this. Yet people are saying who is protecting you? Are you afraid to protect people? Why you went into stand up to, you know, to resist, you know, the torture. So, the thing became so important to people that for us to stop this war, let us share the pain of war. That's the community feeling. And the net effect of sharing the pain of war with other people was the reason why war was, you know, increasing. So despite the fact that we grew up with missing, our dignity being assaulted, our environment vandalized, and with all this growth exhibited on the innocent human being. It was it was a mockery. This is our life can be. Which enough? Did we not press? Why did they do it? Were they doing everything within their power to destroy people to kill and undermine our humanity? What did we do wrong before wondering? And that kind of feeling made possible the height for revenge in some other young people, not only young, but the society as much. But to me, I wouldn't claim that I was a saint but I was I was happy to, to feel that I made a decision which I thought it was unpopular. It was not an unpopular, but the question was, if it's unpopular, do I give

up because I want to stand up for what people are praising, or I choose what I feel I'm personally humbled to know that even if killing is going on, I don't want to be part of the killing. In fact, the best way to criticize war then was to choose peace. To me, that was the decision I made and I say, that is the only moment we can say, let us move away from the shadows of war. Life we do not ask for is the light that has been occupying our space but time has come that we need to let go. We don't have any alternative. But to make sure that we avoid violence. We open our hearts. We we hope in our souls but also realize that fighting will just escalate fighting and more suffering/

TINA:

Can I ask you so the situation today How is that in your region when it comes to young people being involved in conflict and children and so forth?

VICTOR:

Today this environment is struggling to recover. Because, like I said, war took too long kill too many people. And the children who were young then have grown up to become adults. There were once child losers But now they also realize that they are adult losers. Because they thought life would change when war ended, life would change and people would focus on developing them. But everything has become so political to the point that it doesn't matter to many people. So anyway, the biggest fear in Uganda right now, guess like most, the Great Lakes region. History has shown that, after every 20 years, mega disasters happen up in in the region, from the time we saw it in early 60s, early 70s, when you had massacres in Burundi, and conflict in in Congo, that spilled over to conflict in Somalia in late 70s and early 80s. And to what we had in Burundi again, in the DRC, and in, in Sudan, then Darfur came up after sometimes and then came in 1994 genocide of Rwanda. And now, to pick them from the 19 different and genocide that's created all these horrors around the world, to Congo to Uganda to Buruni And we are seeing that every 20 years, children were born and survivors of War Child survivors of war grew up to become adults. And when they are adults, they will say, we are no longer children. We're not going to allow you to keep torturing us. And because it's your power, lack of political change, is when people start resisting. So the biggest resistance comes from young persons from the age of 18 to 25. And that's what every 20-25 years, mas happens in the Great Lakes region. And from the 1984 genocide, to what we're seeing right now. I can, I can say, I'm afraid we are in that window right now. So this is the same fear that we have in Uganda. Lack of change in political system in Uganda, the policies that people accused that

as opposed to responsible that suffering is what I'm afraid will create another problem. So this is what concerns me, Uganda is the covering Northern Uganda agree to move on. But lack of change will undermine the security of the region. And also, this is a concern at national level levels are concerned at a regional level that we are in that window of potential possible mass atrocities. So we do need to really be as careful as we can to to make sure that we we count on that and that's why we my focus now on peace building is totally unlimited and I think we can't allow that to happen again.

TINA:

It's a very sobering description that you're sharing about the current situation in your region, Victor, and situations have changed a bit, as you said, since the conflict in Uganda and new groups have appeared. Are you seeing children being recruited today into new groups.

VICTOR:

My biggest fear is always what we see that when situation is bad somebody wants to change themselves. And I and I would say one of my principles that I do know I can also proudly say that is, despite the attitude I went through, I never tried to escape myself. I remained myself and I maintain my, my personality. And I said, I'm not going to be a tool for disaster or a tool for destruction. I hope to be an asset for peace. And that's what I chose from the beginning and I'll continue that. So right now, the easiest to recruit the marginalized young people who were told you are suffering because of that leader, they're suffering because of that tribe. Unfortunately, we have not been able to move beyond the tribal narrative of politics to tribal supremacy that continues to influence political positioning in the country, is what was brought by colonial powers and it remained the biggest fact reality. So right now, communities Uganda is probably the youngest country in the world with seven to 8%. of population below 10 years, that tells our young countries as the fastest growing economy, women, population, the big problem is the unemployment is so bad and people have got nothing to lose. People are poor people. Power it belongs to few so is a tribal economies a tribal development, tribal power. Everything is, is one sided. And people, majority of the forces, the young people don't get opportunity. The inequality that exists in service delivery opportunities, and lack of inclusion in these, you know, in this development agenda makes it so difficult for young people to resist and a temptation to join any forces. So, they majority are unemployed, they cannot go find life because they're, you know, they're denied opportunity. And if you were blessed to favor instead of using

that as an opportunity to harmonize their standing in their society, using that as a potential to seal and cement their historical power cordoning, they want to say from from from their fathers to their sons, their daughters, as opposed to, from their father to another region or another person. So this is a bit of fact, it is a reality, and definitely young people remain key in changing the region. Unfortunately, at this current pace, it will be negative change. Because even the voices coming in the voices of anger, the voices of fatigue of despair, the poverty wave is strong, and lack of hope, lack of change. And people feel targeted, they feel unwanted, they don't feel they belong. And this one is really quite a problem in a society that has not seen change, they will definitely want to create change. But the question is, what change do you create, it might be negative change. And that's why we need to amplify our positivity but also promote the wave of peace. And so that we can say we do not have to be that generation that will kill our ways to power. We need to be the generation that will love our ways to power and care for the nation and build a community that will all belong. If it's been tough together, we can also get over it together. All we need is to just be kind enough and be able to listen to one another.

TINA:

I mean, you you painting a picture that is it's it's large and it's it's complex. What kind of intervention? If we look at the for instance, recruitment of young people, children today into rebel groups or radical groups in in your region? What type of intervention is needed?

VICTOR:

I think the world as it is, is more focused on power and control and supremacy. Instead of listening to their crying, these people don't just get recruited. They get recruited when they cry and their cry is listened to by no one. Nobody pays attention to their cry and to their needs. That's when they will have to go for this. So, to me, the big issue would be the voices of dissent. The voices of anger is not being met with the voices of hope. The alarm of frustration and bitterness, this and the height for revenge is not being met by the call for reconciliation, dialogue, and the height for reconciliation. In shops, the war drum is sounding stronger and louder than the peace drum, because the peace drummers are missing, the peace drummers are not supported. The peace drummers are seen as poor, they don't have money. And yet in war, there's so much money and that's why the war drummers are doing so well. So the big issue is if we were to have kind of support mechanisms, I would advise, I would recommend engaging into a platform that is intentionally geared towards creating and promoting the culture of peace in the

community. And engaging young people as you know, mobilizing, if they're being recruited into military forces, we need to also engage and scale up our equipment to peace forces. That is the only way we're going to achieve something. If we cannot counter that, by also popularizing peace making this chosen making this profile, then we are going to we're leaving this place to be occupied by the angry war drummers whose agenda as simple as accumulate all wealth at any cost, and that's it remain in control and destroy whoever stands up against you. So the thing is that counter the counter campaigns, you know, it'd be about demolition or destruction. If it's war going on, we can't really succeed by saying we're going to kill our enemies. You can't kill everybody, there will always be something going on. So I think it's not about the cutting edge will not be about tearing or cutting down the trees of war, or the trees of dictators because cutting a tree of the one dictator will always fall and then this it will scatter around and they will sprout everywhere. But the question is, how can we what can be done now so that we don't even allow these trees to grow? So the best way to counter or to criticize the warmongers, to me is to raise peace builders.

TINA:

And that brings me to my final question. I know that you are in the process of setting up a Peace Academy. That will be a pan-African Peace Academy. What role would your this academy play in The larger picture of what you are describing.

VICTOR:

Yes, it is true. After so many years of how our personal individual experience for us, we grew up, amidst war. Everybody wondered why are kids being abducted? Why are kids being killed? So the question is, as far as focus on what is already negative, but not what is the positive. So we are saying we need to pay attention to Why do young people don't fight should be our focus? We shouldn't focus on why did they fight we have known about why do they fight every new day, the sort of second way they're fighting, but not many people have done research on why they don't fight. So from that experience, where we had ourselves not fighting But also in the middle of majority were fighting. We went, we went on to scale up our intervention to say, let us assemble our forces, assemble our energies, and put down the African youth initiative network, which we did set it up. And it has been remarkably progressive, that, you know, our dream was conceived locally. Our dream was meant to heal to address the situation of what we are living, not what we are studying, not what we recite, but what we are living. And this has been successful. For the last 15 years. It's been remarkable journey. We have seen

tremendous success, amount of energy, amount of positivity that came about. But the question is, how long can we keep doing what we're doing? Our focus has been on healing, recovery and rehabilitation. But now we want to say, beyond recovery, we have to focus on prevention and prevention that led us Let us institutionalize our experience, the fact that local people local potential can also come up and do something. So we want to say the world talks about including victims, including refugees and including the affected population. But we are saying we need to tell the world, what it entails, what it looks like, what is going to bring to the world because we are not coming in as people who have been image of where the image of violence or image of pain want to be the image of hope and the image of what is possible. And that's why we say, let us institutionalize our experience. When we grow up when we are growing up we do not fight. I mean this way, there are also people fighting that also led us to forming the last 15 years been remarkably progressive and now want to institutionalize it to to form a Peace Academy which he should be an infrastructure where we are going to have a place to connect the place to promote the homegrown peace builders, but also the place to legitimize every other person's contribution to peace building, we mean, the rural, urban, a poor, rich, the young, old women men, and you know educated an educated we know that every other person's contribution is key in building a society, but always focused close to who are the most exposed, who are the most prominent who are the most educated, but we're saying, Let us give a chance to every perso. The Peace Academy will be in Uganda with intent to reach out and mobilize young people from different parts of the continent, and engage in training, mobilizing them and training them, giving them skills in peace building in leadership for peace, in leadership for reconciliation, and we want to raise the generation of conflict mediators and form a network of peace builders across the continent. And of course, these are going to be assembling our peace was in the continent. We hope that if it works well, one time in not so long time, we should allow a pilot African pan African peace building mission, as opposed to the UN peacekeeping mission, political, it is always peacekeeping mission peacekeeping operation, but on a humanitarian ground want to give the peace building operation on this building mission with the intent to prevent war prevent disasters. So this is what we are looking at that let us have a homegrown solution, but also seek partnership with every other persons around the world, and most important to give legitimacy to local efforts by engaging young people, as leaders in peace building. All in all, how can you make sure Africa is a continent that is all year round peaceful? That is our dream.

TINA:

And that's certainly very hopeful to to listen to your vision with that Victor and also thank you so much for sharing and giving us a context to what's happening now in your region, as well as, you know, putting it in the context of what's happened in the past, and I really want to wish you all the best of luck with your Academy and all your work, which I'm sure is going to transform communities in many, many countries, on your continent and, and inspire, hopefully, in other continents too. Thank you so much.

VICTOR:

It's a pleasure. Thanks a lot for the opportunity. As we stated earlier on, this is our all collectively force. I know we are not alone in this feeling the passion for peace. And, and we want to recommit and say that the whole dream the whole intention is we have seen it all been through everything. And we don't want to allow or give space for more endlessly continuous wrongdoing. We need to step forward and see what we can do better to bring an end to this intolerable living condition by the majority. And of course, also, you know, Africa is is a great place to be. But Africans have never seen peace, majority of the African to survive struggle, they are not living to thrive, they have not been living to thrive, they've only been living to survive. So this is really a problem that we feel we are so tired of it and we want to say, How can we let go this kind of issue and open up new space? But most importantly, how can we lead our selves locally, and with well bearing this vision for the region, and also ensure Africa impacts on the world peace, that is what you want. And I think through the African Peace Academy, which we're working on, we're going to be able to do it better because we have stepped forward with a lot of courage and with so much, hope that mass atrocities will end, child soldiers will not an issue. And of course we are we are sad to see children hating their homes, talented families because they have lost everything that they're saying, if you had power to protect without, but there's a moment in life that you are too powerless to do so. But we shouldn't be too powerless to prevent that sort of stepping forward.

TINA:

Thank you so much, Victor, and all the best with all the work that you and your team is doing on this. And I'm sure that we will see and hear more from you with all of your great initiatives. Thank you so much.

VICTOR: Thank you so much. Have a beautiful day.