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Interview with Edwick Madzimore

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Summary:

Edwick Madzimore, president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Zimbabwe, discusses her advocacy for nuclear disarmament, linking it to broader issues of peace, gender equality, and climate justice. She emphasizes Africa's overlooked role in uranium mining and the disproportionate effects of nuclear testing and proliferation on the Global South. Madzimore critiques the lack of awareness and political will in African governments toward disarmament, advocating for increased public education, demystification of technical nuclear discourse, and stronger civil society coalitions. She underscores the need for gender-inclusive research and policies, highlighting strides made through WILPF's partnerships and regional collaborations to promote disarmament and address systemic inequities. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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Robin Möser: Okay, great. Hi, this Robin Möser interviewing Mrs Edwick Madzimure. She is currently the president of the WILPF, the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. She's based in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe, if I'm correctly informed. I will interview her today regarding our work as activists in the field of nuclear Non-Proliferation as well as climate justice, and many more things. So let me begin this interview, by asking a broad question, how did you personally get here and what is your background? What I'm interested here is your personal career path: how did you end up at WILPF? Thank you.

Edwick Madzimure: Okay, so I joined WILPF in 2016. That is when I met the WILPF president of Ghana. So, it was after my presentation at a conference, it was a conference on peace that I was going to attend in Ghana. So, it was that after that peace conference that she indicated, and told me about the work that WILPF is doing in Africa. And so, when I got home, I had to apply. So, when I did apply, I think it took about six months, by that time, they used to have an executive committee, which was reviewing all the applications for new sections. So, after those six months, that is when they got in touch with me. And it was approved. And then from there, I had to establish a section in Zimbabwe. So, looking at my academic background. My first degree, I did History and International Studies. Then for my master's, I did Development Studies, then it was after Development Studies that I started writing articles, mainly on women, peace and democracy. Yeah.

Robin Möser: Okay. And when did you start working for you WILPF?

Edwick Madzimure: 2017, yeah, because from 2016, they were still doing the paperwork. So, I started on in 2017.

Robin Möser: And you indicated in one of our previous emails that you had to travel. So, is this this part of your work routine? You're based in Harare, but do you travel all over the African continent?

Edwick Madzimure: Yeah, currently, I'm the second regional representative for the African continent. And, yeah, I got through on that role in 2022. So, I'll be the alternative regional representative for the African region from 2022 to 2025. So, the thing is, we have two regional representative, because we've got an English speaking section and a French speaking section.

Robin Möser: Are there any Portuguese speaking sections?

Edwick Madzimure: No, no, no, no, no, we don't have.

Robin Möser: Okay. Now focusing on the role of nuclear weapons. I read online you published about the nexus of uranium mining and proliferation, and you also attended the first state party meeting of the TPNW in Vienna two years ago. This is all very, very interesting. And I would like to know: how do you view the role of nuclear weapons in current world politics? What kind of impact do they have and whether do you see them as a stabilizing factor in international politics?

Edwick Madzimure: So, basically, when we are looking at the issue of nuclear weapons in the African continent, when I started doing this work, I realized that there is very little attention that is being given on nuclear proliferation in Africa, especially by the current governments in Africa. And their main argument was that this does not concern us, because we do not have nuclear power, you know, within the region. So, it is that kind of ignorance that actually compelled me even to do the research that you were talking about when we're looking at the nexus between the climate crisis and uranium, and you know how that cycle is revolving. And when I also attended the seminar of the TPNW, my presentation was mainly focused on actually showing how real the nuclear threat is to the continent, in as much as

we do not have, you know, the nuclear power and we don't have nuclear weapons. And even as we have got very few countries that have got nuclear power. But then if you realize, if you look at the effects of nuclear weapons on our regions, we are actually bearing the brunt. And also taking note of the fact that most of the uranium that is being used to build the nuclear weapon stations, you realize that they are coming from the continent. So, we may try to be ignorant, but then these are actually issues that are actually also knocking on our doors. Because if there is a nuclear implosion elsewhere, we also face the effects. And this is also true even given the effects of the war in Europe, Ukraine right now. We're actually feeling the effects because taxes are rising up, you know, prices of fuel are also increasing. So Yes, in as much as we are not directly involved, we actually suffer from the indirect impact of you know, what is happening elsewhere in the world. So yeah, there's a lot of ignorance when it comes to discussions on nuclear proliferation within the continent.

Robin Möser: I totally agree with you. And the African continent, I think this was also in your report, had been a harmed by nuclear tests by France in Algeria, the whole of West Africa. So, yeah, I think this historic example is almost completely forgotten nowadays.

Edwick Madzimure: Yeah, because, you know, that really happened. It occurred to me when we started to introduce the issue to do with the TPNW to our members of Parliament, so that they can discuss these issues in Parliament. You know, all the chairpersons that I was reaching out to, they were telling you that I know, we are not, this is not a threat, this is not a political issue. We should not prioritize that. So, yeah, you're very right, that most of the countries really in Africa, do not see the need to be actively engaged. And even if you look at how many countries are signing, or ratifying to the TPNW, very few countries are really taking action. So, it's really concerning.

Robin Möser: Yeah, I read that, for example, your home country Zimbabwe acceded to the TPNW, but it, at least to my knowledge, has not yet ratified it.

Edwick Madzimure: Yes, they haven't. No, it's like, yeah, so it's like, they're just taking their time. And every time when we, because we do have a number of advocates meetings with them, they don't give us a straightforward answer. They just promise it, that's it. But at least these days, it's better, because these days, at least we have got that platform to discuss it. So, they are actually making public statements, and we make sure to follow up on them, so that they do something about it.

Robin Möser: I turned off my camera, because I didn't really get all of your last answer. You were saying that they're making state public statements, the government, but not really following up on these promises?

Edwick Madzimure: Yes, exactly.

Robin Möser: I got it right then, yes. And while I understand and agree that the effects of nuclear weapons and testing and what comes with it are very real also for African countries and the people of the continent, do you actually see nuclear weapons in world politics as a sort of stabilizing factor?

Edwick Madzimure: I don't see them as just as a stabilizing factor, except that I see nuclear weapons as a new form of colonization, because if you notice, you realize that all the states that have got nuclear weapons are using that, you know, to actually use it as a threat to power to those who do not have. And then we also have this rush among the world powers to make sure who has got the best weapons and the most, you know, advanced technologies. And then well, as you know, we are facing real

challenges that actually need practical solutions, for instance, the issue of the climate crisis. But then you realize that most of the budgets are actually being channeled towards ensuring that we've got the most advanced nuclear weapons in the world, instead of focusing on the real issues that are actually also contributing to most of the conflicts that we are facing right now. So, I don't believe that they are a stabilizing factor, but I believe that they are actually a threat to peace.

Robin Möser: Thank you. And now focusing a bit more on how to approach this problem. Where do you think the focus of the civil society should be: on elimination and total disarmament? And what are the practical steps towards achieving this goal?

Edwick Madzimure: Yeah, from my experience, in as much as total elimination may be a problem, because I remember sometime last year, we were discussing on safe uses of nuclear power, when you're looking at how nuclear energy can be used. But then we were focusing on the African continent to say that if you've got a nuclear power station to use nuclear energy, there's need for a lot of water. And then if you focus on our continent, when it comes to water, you realize that we already strained for water resources. So, which means that we do not have enough, we don't have the capacity to actually be in a position to maintain nuclear power stations. So, using nuclear energy can also be a challenge. And talking about elimination: Elimination can also be a challenge, especially if you look at the global politics right now. Which country will be prepared to totally eliminate? So somehow I feel, maybe while countries are actually moving towards elimination, it's better that we advocate for safe uses of nuclear power. But then, if we are actually discussing on safe use, we should actually move towards total elimination, because when it comes to our continent, we are not fully capacitated in terms of water reserves. And then if the few water reserves that are there, are contaminated, then what would happen to the continent, that's really a challenge. And it's another factor that is really not being looked into, but it's also a threat to the continent.

Robin Möser: Yeah, I see. And Zimbabwe is bothering South Africa, which is one of the largest medical isotopes producer. And they have they have a nuclear power station. Only one, though. But yeah, I see your point. And when you when you look back a little bit, can you give me your perspective on what do you see as the biggest failure in the field of nuclear disarmament and Non-Proliferation since the end of the Cold War?

Edwick Madzimure: I think the biggest failure, first of all, if you check how much these arms have been affecting, especially the global South, and you've highlighted earlier on how much the global south has actually suffered, you know, the different tests that have been done. And then if you also focus, where are these tests taking place? You realize that while these countries are making their nuclear weapons, they don't use them in their countries, but then they do the testing in the Global South. Which is a challenge, you know, which shows the new forms of colonization that I was actually highlighting earlier. But then you also come back to us as the African continent, you know, in the 1960s. We actually were very excited about the treaties that were coming up when we declared that Africa is a nuclear free zone and all that. But then I don't know what went wrong between In the 1960s until 2000, because everything was quiet. And because of that quietness, the public was not aware of the devastating effects of the use of nuclear weapons and how their continent has been affected. It was only in the previous years that we discovered that, and with that renaissance to really start discussing about the nuclear weapons and how much they've been affecting African countries. But we've been quiet for quite a very long time, which is a challenge on its own. So, I think what went wrong is that the

Global North is also using nuclear energy as a way to actually keep other countries, especially third world countries, under control, which is really a challenge.

Robin Möser: You mean under control in terms of also getting the uranium they need for their reactors? OK, but then the follow up question I have is: how do you see the role of African governments in all this? There are some large uranium producers like South Africa, Congo and Namibia with the Rössing mine and I also think Gabon. How do you see the role of governments as they participate in this global uranium trade?

Edwick Madzimore: Yeah, that is really a case to be concerned with. And you actually also asked earlier on what is our role as civil society. I think our role as civil society is to ensure that we shed light to the general public, so that they know the effects of uranium mining, because as long as someone is not enlightened, it's very difficult for you to be in the same ship. But it is after you've shared that vital information on how much you know, the environmental damage that is being done by the mining activities. And it is through the lens of the environmental damage that you can also actually discuss on what can be done to ensure that we do not continue harming our environment. And like you indicated, we're talking about Congo, how much is the uranium that is being mined and that is being exported from Congo really benefiting the ordinary population? You realize that those people are actually not benefiting from the uranium mining activities that are happening in their communities. Actually, they are also bearing the brunt of the environmental degradation. But without that knowledge, it's very difficult for the public, you know, to even hold their governments accountable for such activities.

Robin Möser: Yeah, I mean, then again, the benefits flow to a political elite within the African countries, but also a large part is absorbed by the companies who invest and they are partially from the Global North. So it's, again, as you said, this kind of colonializing effect. But looking back at this interregnum period, you mentioned between the 70s and the 2000s, when nothing was done, why do you think this was the case? Why did civil society not act differently in addressing these things? Was it because of the Cold War when they had different objectives and problems? So, what could be the reason?

Edwick Madzimore: Somehow, I think that if I look at the African continent, I can say that it was lack of information. Because even currently, when we look at how many civil society organizations within the continent actually raising awareness on the issue of nuclear weapons, you discover that there are very few. That's number one. And then the second issue is that the issue of nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament and verification, it has been a case where you realize that this was an area that was reserved for the experts. It was in an area where you must have, you know, knowledge of nuclear engineering, for you to be, you know, actively conversant with these issues. So, it was that knowledge gap that I believe that has been affecting Africa, you know, these discussions around a nuclear disarmament and verification. I don't know whether I should call it gatekeeping or what, but that has been the case. Because even if you want to penetrate into the organizations that deal with nuclear disarmament, you realize that if you don't have such qualifications, it was very difficult for you to participate in their debate. And even right now, it is very difficult for you to participate actively in those debates if you're not a nuclear engineer, or if you're not an expert in nuclear verification and nuclear issues. So, but I'm happy to say that, you know, in the past five or six years, there is that paradigm shift and that generalization of the issues to do with nuclear energy, nuclear disarmament and verification. So, I believe that if we continue with the path that we are in right now, more is going to be done when

it comes to nuclear disarmament and verification, because we have more people that are engaged. And especially if you bring in the issues that people are conversant with, so that people can really contribute meaningfully to the debate, I think, yeah, that would actually play a pivotal role in ensuring that great strides are taken, especially when we look at the Global South countries.

Robin Möser: I hear you, and I know that Noel Stott and VERTIC they're doing a lot to create this regional hub for disarmament. And actually, a great deal is focusing on education. And Noel told me in our interview, that there's no academic course on Nuclear Non-Proliferation in South Africa. And I guess it is also true for other African countries, I hear you. So, one can summarize your answer that it was earlier a lack of awareness generally, but also a lack of being educated because of the gatekeeping role of colonial states. And, for example, in South Africa, 100% the case. You could not study what you want during apartheid and the industry was in the hands of the Whites. So, that is precisely the part of the problem. So, we stop looking back and look in the future: What do you see as the most important milestones for you in your work and the nuclear?

Edwick Madzimure: So far, when you look at the successes, I think the first one that I can talk about is the demystification, you know, of the nuclear jargon and the fact that I am here discussing nuclear proliferation and disarmament means that they are great strides that have been taken so far. And looking at us, we are a women's organization, and usually women are not very much involved in disarmament issues. But we're actually seeing a great number of women rising up and, you know, calling against disarmament and being actively involved in these discussions and actually being also in a position to link the dots that are existing right now to say that, "okay, fine, when you're looking at nuclear weapons, we are affected as women, because of ABCD". That was not the case previously. And so, I hope in the next few years, there will be a lot of researches and that these researchers will actually inform our advocacy. And that's actually a great deal. Because without information, it's very difficult for you to move, you know, the state's position and state policies. Because if you go to politicians, you're supposed to go there with a strong case. So, I'm happy with the developments that are happening right now. And I'm positive that in the next few years, we'll be having a lot of researchers that will be informing the different advocates that we are taking various labor from local, national to regional and international platforms.

Robin Möser: Great, great. What you just told me I can confirm with my own research. When I did interviews with South Africans about their nuclear program back in apartheid, I interviewed more than 50 people, but only one woman. She was the ambassador to the IAEA back in the early 90s. It was exclusively a male domain. So, I'm glad that things are changing. But let's now talk a little bit more about your organization WILPF. How does the nuclear portfolio fit your organization's mission? And I know you're not solely working on nuclear issues, but maybe you can focus now more on the on the nuclear work that you do, if possible.

Edwick Madzimure: Okay, so basically, our main objective is to achieve gender equality and peace. So, we realized that it's very difficult for us to achieve gender equality when we don't talk about disarmament. So, when we're talking about nuclear weapons these are part of our disarmament projects that we carry out. We look at nuclear weapons, fully autonomous weapons and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. So, this has been the these have been the main weapons that we've been focusing on as an organization and we are part of the Stop Killerrobots Network. We are also a part of the ICAN network. And through these networks, we've been able to carry out, you know,

a lot of disarmament advocacy activities. So, where do the disarmament activities fit into the work that we do, especially at local and national level? You know, we realized that there is a very close link between the climate crisis and conflict, but when we're looking at the climate crisis at the grassroots level, these are food security issues, these are water scarcity issues, you've got domestic violence issues that are emanating from such problems. Then how do we link it now with the regional and the international politics of the day, like I highlighted earlier on? If you check, you realize that 100 billion was pledged, you know, by global North countries to be channeled towards the climate change fight. And that 100 billion as it is right now has not been, you know, distributed to various areas where it is supposed to attend to. But while that is the case, we then focus it how much is being used on militarization only? So, if you focus on how much is being used on militarization and if you look at the problems that we are facing a grassroots level, you realize that the money that is needed to focus on the challenges that I'm highlighting, like building climate resilient communities, having alternative water sources, like reaching out to underground water, all those issues. It's a very minimum amount, you know, but then much of the amount, especially by the club owners, is being channeled towards what, towards the claim towards militarism. And then, how are our governments responding to that? Most of our governments are actually spending on militarization, while they are neglecting the very issues that are contributing to conflict at grassroots level. So, this is how we link, you know, our work with militarism. And then not only do we focus on the military expenditure, we also focus on how much the greenhouse gas emissions that are being caused by the many military industries. We also look at also how much the environment on its own is being degraded by the military, when they are doing their tests. Especially in Africa right now, the situation in Africa is not very good when it comes to the issues of conflict and how much the environment is being affected. So, that's the cycle that we use when we are actually analyzing the link that is there between environmental degradation, the climate crisis, and how these issues are also contributing to conflicts. And where there is conflict, it is very difficult for us to say that we are actually achieving gender equality. And when we look at how much conflicts affect women, I'm sure you agree with me that women are disproportionately affected by conflicts. So, we realize that we can't focus on the one, without looking at the other. Because right, right now, the world is suffering from the climate issue. But then is USA actually declaring, honestly, how much their military industries is contributing to greenhouse gas emissions? No, they're not. And recently, we're actually even looking at Africa, how much Africa was contributing to livestock production, because it's contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. But what is the percentage that Africa is contributing when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions? And how much is being produced by the countries that are in the Global North? And then when we look at the countries that are in the Global North, what is the source of the greenhouse gas emissions? If you look at the main source of these emissions, you'll notice that these are the military industries that are contributing. So yeah, that's really a challenge. So, that's how we do our analysis of peace and conflict and the climate crisis. And that's why we're also advocating for demilitarization, because we believe that if there demilitarization, then we have more resources actually being channeled to the real problems that are being faced, especially at grassroots level. Because as much as we may do our advocating at national level, at international level, at regional level, we have to be practical about the solutions that we want. And we have to be practical about the real issues that are being faced by people and we have to talk about the real issues that are also contributing to these very problems that are being faced by people at the grassroots level, because that is where we are and that is where the real issues are happening.

Robin Möser: Okay, thank you. And in the work you've just described, looking at Zimbabwe, but also the Southern African region and Africa as a whole. What would be your closest partners you work with and you team up, can you name some organizations?

Edwick Madzimore: Okay, fine. So, at national level, what we did is we actually formed a coalition of organizations that are working in disarmament. But to be honest with you, why are we very few? It's because of that lack of information and that lack of knowledge that I've been talking about. Most of the organizations actually do not really see the need to be very active in disarmament issues. And well, some believe that it is an area that really needs expertise. Not that I blame them, but if you go to advocacy meetings, and if you're really not conversant with these issues, you know, the politicians will actually grill you to the extent that you ask yourself: "why did I come here? Because I knew nothing". So, if you've got that fear, it's very difficult for you to be actively involved. And in Zimbabwe, it's also when you're looking at militarism, the Minister of Defense always says that this is not a civilian issue. And as civilians, you are not supposed to be actively involved in these issues - what do they call them in their jargon, the jargon that they use? So, if you don't know how to navigate through the system, it is very difficult. So, that's why most organizations, you know, prefer not to be actively involved in disarmament issue. So, when it comes to the regional level we are part of, I told you, we are part of the ICANN campaign, we are also part of the Stop Killer Robots campaign. So, through these campaigns they've got a number of organizations that are actually involved in in disarmament issues. So, while we meet in different areas, like you know, fully autonomous weapons and nuclear weapons, I also realized that the same faces that you see when you're doing Stop Killer Robots campaigns are the same faces that you also see in the nuclear disarmament spaces. And it is because of that issue that most civil society organizations are really not much involved in such issues. And the other thing that I also I think it's very important to highlight is there is no much funding that has been or that is being channeled in disarmament issues. And in most of the activities that we carry out, we'll be using our personal funds. So, that's why you see, it's also very difficult even to get some more civil society organizations to be involved. Rather, they will, you know, flock in areas where they know that, okay fine, if we deal with health, if we deal with HIV issues, we'll get funding for these issues. So, the lack of funding in disarmament advocacy is also another issue of concern, which is actually also pushing out a number of civil society organizations from really participating in the activities at regional and international level. So yeah, we have organizations that we are working with at regional level, and through these organizations, we actually organize ourselves on how we are going to advocate when it comes to certain platforms and when it comes to AU platforms. So, that's how we coordinate our work within the region. And even at national level, we just don't go on a personal basis to the minister of foreign affairs, we actually sit down as a coalition and we plan on what we're going to be doing, you know, in the next three months. And then when we carry out our advocacy visits, we do that as a coalition, even when we're making submissions to Parliament. We don't make submissions as an individual organization, but we actually draft as a coalition, and then we do that submission is a coalition, because we realize that if we work in silos, it will be very difficult for the government to take us seriously, as you can imagine. Yeah, you can imagine a situation we have Zimbabwe today when we pay a visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to say that, again, we are giving you this submission, please, can you contribute to the Secretary General's report. And then, in the next few days, another organization comes forward with the same message. So, we realized that if we work as a coalition it

makes sense. And we also have the expertise of some members that are in the Radiation Authority of Zimbabwe, in as much as they can't actively be involved in advocacy because of their code of conduct.

Robin Möser: That is a good thing. Also, I think that WILPF has a diversified portfolio of areas in which you work, but then again, when you're not working alone, you also don't need all the expertise in every single area. You can join forces and team up with others. That's very good, a good thing. And how do you perceive other actors in the field? For example, think tanks and academics? You mentioned ICAN - how do you view ICAN?

Edwick Madzimore: With ICAN the work that I've been doing with them since 2018, they've been helping us really unpack, you know, the different articles under the TPNW. And I'm sure, like you were saying, there are other issues where you really need expertise, and especially when it comes to unpacking and explaining the articles of the TPNW. Yeah, ICAN has been doing that. And they've been making educational materials. And it is through these educational materials that we can take them to different members of parliament to share that knowledge of unpacking the TPNW. And when it comes to the expertise, I realized there was a time when they highlighted that there was going to be research on nuclear disarmament. But then that research, it seems like it was mainly for those people that are actually really experts when it comes to nuclear issues. So, which was very difficult for other players, you know, to be actively involved in those researches, because they will be looking at the deeper scientific impacts of nuclear proliferation and disarmament and all that. So, that that's really a challenge at times.

Robin Möser: Okay, okay. And academics in that respect, you benefit probably from their research, but how's your interaction with them?

Edwick Madzimore: Ah, when it comes to the universities, just like, I don't know, if Stoot mentioned it, most universities in Zimbabwe or not offering programs that have got something to do with nuclear preparation and even disarmament. We don't have such. But I'm not sure about those that are doing nuclear engineering, if they even cover modules that locates disarmament and verification, that I'm not quite sure, because I'm really not an expert in the nuclear issues. And I'm not really quite sure of how much they are shaping their modules that deal with nuclear engineering.

Robin Möser: OK, asking from a less technological perspective, for example, people like Noel, who has been doing research is not an academic and part of an university, but he has sort of an academic approach. And then there are other studies done by international scholars who publish their work, do you draw on them and use this for your advocacy work and your case?

Edwick Madzimore: Um, I'll be honest with you. The reason why I actually thought about doing the report that you were referring to earlier, was that I found most of the academics reports that have been done, especially when you look at the nuclear research, they are very technical. Yeah, they are very difficult for a layperson to actually comprehend. Yes.

Robin Möser: Okay. I see that. And what about think tanks? Are there any your cooperate with, for example, in Vienna, Washington etc. in terms of funding joint projects or advocacy approaches towards subject XY?

Edwick Madzimore: Not yet. We haven't done that.

Robin Möser: Okay. And maybe you can tell me more about your cooperation with ICAN. You hinted at it a little bit, but when did it start and how did they approach WILPF? Or was the initiative to join forces coming from?

Edwick Madzimure: So, basically, it was not us at regional level, but ICAN had an interface with WILPF at the international level. Because WILPF is part of the steering committee. So, we actually joined as a result of the relationship that is there between ICAN and WILPF International.

Robin Möser: Okay, I see. And now I think we are at the point where I'd like go back to the broader issues, the larger points. And I would be interested, especially from your perspective, whether the debate about global nuclear disarmament and what comes with it doesn't actually include a recognition of the gendered impact of nuclear weapons. Do you feel that this is addressed either directly or indirectly?

Edwick Madzimure: So far, there hasn't been much that has been done, you know, to actually look at the gendered effects of nuclear weapons. But then in the past two or three years, given the conferences that I've attended on nuclear disarmament, based on that realization, you're actually seeing a number of women that are coming up to speak even about the effects of nuclear weapons. And there have been speakers that have been taken from from Hiroshima from Nagasaki. So, I think that aspect that we are now seeing, female voices really speaking out on these international platforms, means we might be stepping in the right direction. In the past, gender issues and nuclear disarmament or nuclear proliferation were really not much talked about. But there is that slow progress now. The kind of research is that actually coming up. I can give a reference to VERTIC when you look at the topics that they actually focusing on this year, it means that they are now realizing that there is more research that needs to be done on women and nuclear disarmament, which was not the case in the past years. And if you look at their past call for papers, it didn't really match well on those general issues, because they were more interested in the technical aspects of nuclear verification and proliferation and stuff like that.

Robin Möser: Okay. I see. And do you think, generally, that WILPF or your own voice is heard and represented in ICANs leadership decisions on a national and also on an international level?

Edwick Madzimure: Oh, that hasn't been the case. A lot has been when it comes to ensuring that voices from the Global South I heard. And I'm also happy to tell you that last year, the countries that met in New York, the African countries that met in New York, actually took time to make the African strategic document that would inform the ICAN activities and that document, I think we're supposed to finalize and validate it in the next coming week. So, if we've got, you know, if we have such a platform where organizations from the Global South can contribute to this discussion, I think that would show a shift, you know, from where things were up to now, because previously, organizations from the Global South didn't really have a voice. And even when it comes to the campaigning, the campaigns were actually coordinated and brainstormed by the international office. But now, I think, yeah, we are having that shift. And we'll see how that strategic document will be treated.

Robin Möser: So, the culture is still there, but it's about to change that actually African countries taking up leadership roles in the campaign themselves. And do you know if this will also be the case in other African countries or is it only in Zimbabwe that the national campaign will be informed by this strategic document?

Edwick Madzimore: Yeah, the document is going to be used by most civil societies from the African region. Yeah, because it is the representatives of the different civil society organizations, they actually advocated for the meaningful participation and engagement of symbols of the African civil society organizations. And as far as I'm concerned, they are also calling for this purpose. If you look at the members that have been in the steering committee, they've been there for a very long time. So, some organizations are saying that no, in a democracy, we need that that fair representation. If you represent for three or four years, I think, maybe some other organizations should also come in and bring fresh ideas instead of having more like permanent member, permanent organizations in the steering committees.

Robin Möser: I see. And do you feel that through your engagement and your activism, the visibility of wealth has actually increased?

Edwick Madzimore: Yes, yes, it has improved a lot. Because I am very confident to tell you that since 2018, we have been the only organization that has been carrying out regular advocacy meetings at national level. Prior to our engagement, there were no organizations that were actually engaging the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that were engaging the Zimbabwean UN missions in Geneva as well as in New York. So, we've been doing that. And through our engagement, we realized that there was no synergy between these three offices, the office in the capital, the office at the UN in Geneva and the office in New York. But through our engagement, we've been able to bring that synergy between these three offices. And yeah, we hope that may be in the next two years or so, we'll be seeing a difference, especially in the way that issues of disarmament are being handled. Because at times, you go to the national level, and you ask questions about the issues that were discussed in the UN, maybe last week, those people will show you that they really don't know nothing about such topics. Yet, they're supposed to know, because it is the national that actually informs, like the signing and the ratification of treaties. And at times, Zimbabwe would have signed such a treaty or such a policy document, but when you come to the Capitol, and then you ask them: "are you aware that Zimbabwe is a signatory to this?" And then the people that are in the national office will not be aware of such. So, through the different meetings, which we are carrying out there is that shift. We are actually bringing to their attention issues, which the national office is supposed to be also making noise about so that they speak with one voice from the national office to the different missions.

Robin Möser: And did all this come in the wake of the whole TPNW debate?

Edwick Madzimore: Exactly.

Robin Möser: OK, I see. Now, coming back to another point. How would you define - I know this is a difficult question, but I'm interested in your view - how would you define impact in your field? And could you give me an example where WILPF had an impact focusing on nuclear Non Proliferation and disarmament?

Edwick Madzimore: Okay, so focusing on nuclear proliferation: how do I define impact, or maybe a outcome, of the different advocacy meetings that we have been carrying out? Firstly, when I indicated earlier that in the previous years, the government has started making public statement on nuclear disarmament in the newspapers, for us that's a very positive impact because previously that these were issues that were really not discussed about. That's number one. And then number two, when our government last year was invited to take part in the TPNW seminar. They actually agreed and attended

that, which is also a plus, because these are some of the issues which were not being prioritized and I can even give an example of the first meeting of state parties. Zimbabwe was invited, but it did not attend. It was 2022 the one that was held in Vienna. I attended and we even invited the government, but they did not attend. Okay, but yeah, it after that meeting, what we did is that we went back to the capital and we gave them a full report of how the meeting was. And when the regional seminar was organized, we went back to invite them and this time they actually agreed and then they attended. So, when we look at such issues, you realize that okay, fine, in as much as these are small strides, we are actually making strides. And it was in 2023, that the President even announced that we are going to ensure that we ratify soon the TPNW. So yeah, for us, I think those are great strides, and not only looking at nuclear disarmament, but also on other disarmament issues. For instance, Zimbabwe was also one of the countries that actually voted yes, to vote for the UN to have a binding instrument on fully autonomous weapons. So, that was also a positive impact. When it comes to the advocacy work that we are doing it shows that yes, we doing really good in some way.

Robin Möser: Thank you. I would have asked you now a question about your definition of success and whether you can give me an example of success in your work, but I think we can combine this, because the impact you just mentioned, is sort of the success coming out your daily work, if I can put it that way. So, would you agree that in this case impact equals success, according to your definition? Or would success be something differently?

Edwick Madzimore: Exactly. Yes.

Robin Möser: Okay, I see. And we discussed earlier that there hasn't been much done in global disarmament during the past decades. What do you think is the reason for this over the last 20 to 25 years? And is there a concrete actor or organizational group to blame for the lack of progress.

Edwick Madzimore: Basically, I don't think there is any group to blame, but I think there has been a lack of innovativeness, you know, to ask ourselves what has been the best practices? What are we doing great and where do we really need to improve? And I'm happy that now we have got organizations like VERTIC, that are really actually asking those serious questions. And how are they going to answer these questions? They are taking part in research throughout the continent. And I believe that these researchers, when we focus on the African continent, they will really inform the work that will be done, you know, in the next three or four or five years. Because basically, when we look at this armament research especially on the African continent, very little has been done, which means that whatever actions, whatever program that have been done, those programs, we're not speaking to the realities within the continents. But then, like you we were saying earlier on, we're talking about programs that have been discussed in the Global North, in the absence of the actual actors that are in the Global South. So yes, as long as we have got such programs it is really a challenge for us to have successes. Like right now, we are on the ground, we have had these advocacy meetings with the government, and we actually identified some of the weaknesses in some of the good practices. And when you look at the good practices, continuous engagement is very important. Why is continuous engagement very important? Because we are dealing with politicians, from 2018 to 2023, you are dealing with another member XY, the chairperson of the defense committee etc. can even change after elections. So, if you have that, shift or movement of people from offices, you have to go there continuously and continuously introduce yourself, and take that person through where have you been and where are you right now? What are you expecting from that person? Who's new in that

office? So, without that continuous engagement, it's really a challenge. So, if you ask me, yeah, in as much as it's difficult to point fingers, but we really need programs that are informed by the people that are on the ground. And how do we do that? We can only do that through research and through the research outcomes. We can now sit down and say okay, fine, this is the result that we got from Zimbabwe, these are the matters arising, how do we address them? We are going to address them like this. But without those researches and without listening to the people that are on the ground, in those campaigns you can then only tick a box, but without meaningful successes. Yeah.

Robin Möser: I see. Okay, this basically brings us to my last question. I would like to know what are your main expectations for the future of the field? Where do you expect the nuclear field to go in the next five to 50 years?

Edwick Madzimore: Okay, so what do I expect? I expect the younger generations to be educated more on nuclear proliferation and disarmament, so that we actually address the information gaps that has been affecting us right now. Because we've got people that are in offices, we've got policymakers that really don't know what we are talking about and what we are expecting. So, in the next three to five years, if we can share as much information as possible to the younger generation that would play a pivotal role. And not only sharing information, but also ensuring that that information will also cascade even to the younger generation, because it is that information gaps, which has been affecting us, especially when it comes to the African continent. And the other issue is the securitization of the topic, to say that this is not an issue for civilians, which is the problem number one. And then number two, the issue that there is a lot of jargon and the aspect that the issue of nuclear disarmament and proliferation has been reserved for the experts, we need to demystify that. So that any general person could be in a position to discuss the various issues, the general issues for nuclear disarmament: why we need that, why is it important? So, if we can have the general population aware of such issues, then we'll be going somewhere.

Robin Möser: So, once these issues are addressed, you expect the field to be more accessible also for people from the Global South, right?

Edwick Madzimore: Exactly.

Robin Möser: Thank you very much. I stop the recording.