

The Youth Peacemaker Network Enters a New Phase in South Sudan



ToT training in South Sudan

In Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan, the Youth Peacemaker Network has advanced to a crucial next phase. Earlier this year, **18 trainers of trainers (ToTs)**—high-level youth leaders who, for the past two years, have been receiving comprehensive training from WPDI in peacebuilding, mediation, ICTs, life skills, and business skills—**began working with a group of 180 young women and men from across the state that comprise the next level of the network.** Over the course of 2016, the ToTs will replicate the trainings they received for these “payam youth”—so named because the group includes two youth from every payam (a political sub-division below the county) of Eastern Equatoria. Working with advisory councils composed of prominent leaders and teachers from their communities, in February and April, **the ToTs held a series of five-day training sessions for payam youth** in every county of the state. Two more training sessions will occur later in the year before the ToTs and the payam youth begin implementing the community-

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building and income-generating projects they are developing together, with the guidance of their advisory council and WPDI business trainers.

In addition to their responsibilities training the payam youth, **several ToTs are also working with the governor of Imatong State to mediate reconciliation efforts in local communities.** In February, these ToTs accompanied the governor on a tour of the state and facilitated several mediation sessions. The ToTs also had the opportunity to observe as the governor and ranking officials led more-complex, multi-party mediations.

In cooperation with our partners Ericsson, Zain, and UNESCO, **we have opened three new Community Learning Centers** in Kapoeta North, South, and East Counties. These centers are fully operational, and each welcomes over 100 visitors per month to take part in literacy and computer classes or to utilize the reading corner housed within each center. UNESCO recently completed a weeklong training program for the 23 new teachers who will conduct literacy classes at the five Community Learning Centers that have now been established throughout Eastern Equatoria.

Earlier this year, WPDI and The Earth Institute at Columbia University **finalized plans for a comprehensive**

monitoring and evaluation of the Youth Peacemaker Network and Community Learning Centers in South Sudan. This major research project began in May with a pilot evaluation. We are optimistic that this inquiry will help us find ways to strengthen these programs and engage more community members in our efforts.

Meanwhile, at a protection-of-civilians (POC) site in Juba, WPDI's Peace Through Sports program continues to have significant impact. **Several thousand children and youth have participated in daily sports and peacebuilding activities held at the POC site since the program began in 2014,** and 400 youth are currently receiving training in life skills and conflict prevention through the program. In addition, 60 youth have completed over 160 hours of FIFA-certified referee and coaching trainings. In honor of International Women's Day, WPDI—in collaboration with the UN Population Fund, Nonviolent Peaceforce, and the International Rescue Committee—put on a soccer tournament and cultural celebration at the POC site in March. And currently, 32 children's teams are competing in a tournament organized jointly with Sports for Hope, where the matches are accompanied by psychosocial support sessions for the participants.

Peace Through Sports participants pose together before a soccer match



Hidita Scovia Beda
25 years old
Eastern Equatoria
South Sudan

“I was motivated to become a youth peacemaker because I saw a lot of problems in my community:

food insecurity, insufficient health facilities, youth unemployment, and inadequate learning centers. Through WPDI, I have gained peacebuilding, mediation, and computer skills. I and my fellow peacemakers feel passionate about this program, because it is helping us make progress in addressing these challenges. Through our efforts to reconcile the communities that were not at peace with each other, we are now eating and drinking water from the same pot. At the end of the day, I hope to see the country in total peace. I hope to see the youth productive and employed. I hope to see people living in harmony with one another.”



A New Community Learning Center and Expansion of the Conflict Resolution Education Program in Northern Uganda



Youth collaborate during a training at WPDI's Community Learning Center in Gulu

Earlier this year, WPDI and Ericsson, with the financial support of the Starkey Hearing Foundation, **established our first Community Learning Center in Northern Uganda**. The new center, located in the district of Gulu, holds ICT trainings, business-skills trainings, and literacy classes that are open to all. Niteo Africa, an organization devoted to promoting education and literacy in Uganda, has donated hundreds of books to the center's library as well as to the Community Learning Centers in South Sudan. **Almost 600 community members have taken part in classes, checked out books, or used the Internet at the center over the past two months.**

WPDI is also **expanding its Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) program in Northern Uganda to two new campuses this year**. Founded at Hope North Secondary and Vocational School, our CRE program helps give students both the ability to recognize sources

of conflict in the disagreements and challenges that arise in their lives as well as the skills to be able to move past them without resorting to violence. CRE sessions have already begun at Sacred Heart Secondary School, and the program will commence at Gulu High Secondary this coming term.

Finally, **30 high-level youth peacemakers trained by WPDI have recruited more than 130 local youth** who are joining together to implement **six promising community-building and income-generating projects**. These initiatives range from businesses that provide employment opportunities for vulnerable youth, to support groups for individuals suffering from drug and alcohol addictions, to campaigns intended to encourage students to remain in school. WPDI is providing financial and logistical support to these projects, which will be launched over the coming months.



ICT training at WPDI Community Learning Center in Gulu



Niteo Africa's shipment of books at the Community Learning Center



A full classroom during an ICT training at the Community Learning Center



**One Geoffrey Akena
24 years old, Northern Uganda**

"I am proud that, because of my hard work with WPDI, we are bringing better living conditions to our communities. Through our farming activities, we are creating employment for

several of our community members, and we are producing something that can help people. I hope one day to see my community respond together to the challenges we face by building peace among ourselves. I believe I can use the knowledge, skills, and experiences I have gained with WPDI to help resolve our problems and bring us closer to peace."

Community-Building Projects Continue to Grow in Tijuana as Peacemakers' Trainings Progress in Chiapas

In Tijuana, Mexico, WPDI's **32 youth peacemakers remain committed to their six community-building initiatives** throughout the city. Several of the teams are working at a drug rehabilitation center for teenage girls, conducting workshops on human rights, bullying awareness and prevention, and positive life skills and values. Other groups are leading conflict resolution classes for children at the Boys and Girls Club, or leading environmental awareness campaigns in local public high schools. These projects have collectively engaged almost 1000 children and youth in positive peacebuilding initiatives.

At the southern end of the country, in Chiapas, WPDI's **28 youth peacemakers are nearing completion of the training portion of the program** after over a year of classes and workshops. This past May, the Chiapas peacemakers had their final training retreat, where they learned about techniques for engaging and teaching other youth. Following those sessions, the peacemakers have begun holding short workshops for students at local schools to practice their leadership and teaching skills. Over the next few months, **the peacemakers will use these abilities to recruit youth in their communities to join the peacebuilding and development projects they are designing.** These projects, to be launched in August of this year, will provide sexual-violence seminars for young women, promote community engagement and job-skills trainings among youth, build the capacity of rural families to increase food production with environmentally friendly techniques, and promote literacy and native languages among young people through mobile libraries.





Life skills training for the youth peacemakers in Chiapas



Leydi Laura Castillejos Vera
26 years old
Chiapas, Mexico

“I’ve always wanted to do things that make me grow as a person, but if on top of that my actions contribute in a positive way to my community, this is a great achievement. The fact that each participant in this program understands his or her community is a big advantage, since there is nothing better than having a complete vision of the environment where one works. I believe that the multiplication of all our efforts through collaborative networks can be a powerful tool that contributes greatly to the social development of our communities.”



Cesar Oswaldo Castro Sanchez
18 years old
Tijuana, Mexico

“There is a lack of trust in my community. People tell us that they have

been lied to about many things and that is why it is difficult for them to believe there are honest people who want to help. I was motivated to become a youth peacemaker because I wanted to be a part of changing this attitude. I wanted to interact with other youth who wanted to participate with this kind of initiative so we can spread the word about how, little by little, we can change our communities for the better. Now, I feel comfortable enough to talk to other youth about how we can work together to resolve our differences peacefully. Opportunities, like the one I have been given, motivate you to keep moving forward despite the hard situations we have to go through every single day of our lives.”

Children follow peacemakers' instructions during a lesson at a Boys and Girls Club in Tijuana



Domestic Harmonizer Program Prepares for Middle School Launch in August

Over the past several months, the Domestic Harmonizer Program has rapidly progressed. First and foremost, we are pleased to officially announce that **WPDI will be collaborating with Andrew Carnegie Middle School in Carson, California**—a school in the Los Angeles Unified School District—as well as with our pre-existing partner, California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH). WPDI and CSUDH will pilot this program starting in August 2016 with a training customized for the educators at Carnegie Middle School. **This program will continue for the next three academic years** and will be implemented collaboratively with all of the teachers and students at Carnegie with the intention of creating a peaceable school culture. We are thrilled to be working with such strong partners to launch this **unparalleled program and curriculum, which intertwines CRE with the Common Core State Standards for social studies, science, math, and English.** In fact, over the past quarter, WPDI and CSUDH worked closely with early-adopter teachers at this middle school to customize the program to the teachers' academic curricula and goals. We all remain eager to pilot this program in the coming months and years.

In addition, **WPDI continued to provide CRE classes to students at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School in Compton, California.** Sixth grade students expanded their basic understandings of conflict resolution by learning active listening skills, the importance

of fulfilling unmet needs, and how to work towards creative solutions. Students were able to learn these skills and techniques through arts-based activities. In written evaluations completed at the conclusion of the course, students remarked on their high degree of satisfaction with the classes. One student wrote, "I learned that we should really listen when we are in conflict and we should be happy that some of us are in peace. I hope that you can change more children around the world." Another student stated, "From the classes, I learned that not all conflict is bad and how to solve conflict." These are remarkable reflections from 11-year-olds.

Last but not least, our founder and CEO participated in a [video](#) for the White House Talent Show as a part of his ongoing commitment to the Turnaround Arts Initiative of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. The video includes a number of renowned artists dedicated to expanding the impact of the arts in education.

Forest Whitaker joins sixth graders at MLK Elementary School in song



Forest Whitaker Advocates for Gender Equality, Sustainable Development Goals, and Global Humanitarian Commitment



Emma Watson and Forest Whitaker kick off HeForShe Arts Week together

WPDI's founder and CEO has kept busy these past few months. In commemoration of International Women's Day and to kickoff [HeForShe Arts Week](#), on March 8, Mr. Whitaker and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson took part in [a conversation](#) on gender equality in peacebuilding and the entertainment industry.

At the event, organized by UN Women and held at New York's Public Theater, Mr. Whitaker spoke about the importance of empowering women to take part in the peace process. "You can't really find peace in the world if 50 percent of the world is women and they're not included in the conversation," Mr. Whitaker said. He also highlighted ways in which WPDI engages women in its work, including through WPDI's partnership with UN Women and its computer and literacy classes targeted specifically toward girls and women at its Community Learning Centers.

Mr. Whitaker returned to New York City in April for the UN General Assembly's High-Level Thematic Debate on Achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). In January, because of Mr. Whitaker's and WPDI's commitment to the principles underlying the 2030 Sustainable Agenda, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had appointed Mr. Whitaker to the UN SDG Advocacy Group to raise awareness and rally support for the 17 goals. In his capacity as an SDG Advocate, Mr. Whitaker [spoke](#) to the gathered heads of state and dignitaries about the importance of engaging ordinary citizens to work toward achieving the SDGs. Later, he shared a conversation with Thomas Gass, Assistant Secretary-General in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to talk about specific ways that ordinary people could contribute to the SDGs. During the discussion, Mr. Whitaker stressed that individuals had to consider their

obligations to their fellow citizens around the globe. “We have to remember that we’re citizens of a country but also citizens of the world,” he said.

Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Gass also [visited](#) a local high school, the Bronx Center for Science and Mathematics, to talk to students about the SDGs and the role each of them could play in helping achieve them.

And just last month, [Mr. Whitaker participated](#) in the first-ever [World Humanitarian Summit](#) in Istanbul. This was an important opportunity for world leaders, NGOs, aid organizations, businesses, and individuals from vulnerable communities to come together to discuss more-collaborative and more-sustainable approaches to international aid. Mr. Whitaker [addressed the audience](#) at the Summit’s opening ceremonies, imploring conference participants to view individuals living in conflict-impacted communities, especially youth, as partners—not simply as victims—as we work together to bring peace and sustainable development to these regions of the world.

We invite you to learn more about Mr. Whitaker’s thoughts and experiences at the Summit in a series of



Forest Whitaker and Thomas Gass discuss the SDGs

pieces that he wrote for the *Huffington Post* while in Istanbul ([Facing Our Common Humanity Together](#), [Education as a Bridge Between Aid and Development](#), and [Giving Everyone a Voice](#)), in a *TIME* op-ed he co-authored with UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova on the importance of protecting schools during periods of violence, and in a [podcast](#) he recorded with Elaine Weidman-Grunewald, VP of sustainability and corporate responsibility at Ericsson.

Forest Whitaker addresses the audience at the World Humanitarian Summit opening ceremony



A Night of Music and Celebration

More than a dozen Broadway stars came together on May 9 in New York City at 42West to support WPDI during Forest Whitaker's [Performers4Peace](#) concert. Approximately 250 guests enjoyed an evening of music featuring popular songs of peace, love, and friendship.

The event—produced by Julie Boardman at Untitled Theatricals, with the support of the Pekoe Group and KLM Royal Dutch Airlines—was an opportunity to highlight some of the peacebuilding work that WPDI does around the globe. Guests saw a [video](#) that explained WPDI's mission and featured many of our youth peacemakers. Mr. Whitaker spoke during the event about the importance of many people coming together, through small acts of love and kindness, to create significant change.



WPDI Performers4Peace concert

WPDI's Newest Partnerships


Over the past few months, WPDI has joined forces with several organizations that are contributing to our mission in unique and important ways.



KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, the world's oldest airline, is known for its reliable operations, friendly service, sustainable innovation, and global presence

on five continents. **KLM** is the official airline of WPDI, supporting our mission and field programs.

IKEA Foundation  The philanthropic arm of the INGKA Foundation (owner of the IKEA Group of companies), the IKEA Foundation is working toward a world where children living in poverty have more opportunities to create a better future for themselves and their families. The IKEA Foundation is providing financial support for the Youth Peacemaker Network and Community Learning Centers in South Sudan.

THE EARTH INSTITUTE  The Earth Institute at **COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY** Columbia University is working with WPDI to conduct a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the Youth Peacemaker Network in South Sudan.



Niteo Africa, an organization dedicated to promoting literacy and education in Uganda and beyond, has generously donated hundreds of books and educational resources for our Community Learning Centers in Uganda and South Sudan.



The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations has provided a large quantity of seeds that are being distributed to communities where our peacemakers are working in Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan.

As always, we are grateful for the contribution of our partners, without whose support none of WPDI's work would be possible.