



WHITAKER  
PEACE & DEVELOPMENT  
INITIATIVE

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# LOOKING FORWARD FOR PEACE

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*LESSONS FROM A YEAR OF CRISIS*



# A NOTE FROM FOREST WHITAKER

2020 has assuredly been a year of unprecedented disruption, with COVID-19 forcing us to a near halt in many of our target countries. Throughout the crisis, though, WPDI was nevertheless able to withstand these challenges thanks in large part to the dedication of our staff and our youths who collectively demonstrated that we are first and foremost a resilience-driven organization. At their own initiative, more than 1,200 of our youth peacemakers mobilized to educate people in their communities about COVID-19 and how to keep themselves safe. They conducted community dialogues, participated in radio talk shows, and distributed more than 75,000 face masks and other hygienic supplies. Their actions have directly reached more than 300,000 people in some of the most remote areas of Uganda and South Sudan. These accomplishments vindicate our approach that empowered youths have unique potential to help boost the capacity for resilience of their communities. Such empowerment, however, would not have been possible without the selfless involvement of our teams. With fortitude, they have strived to keep programs active and alive, constantly adjusting and adapting to the changing landscape of regulations and restrictions. Most of our programs have remained on track. This is a success.

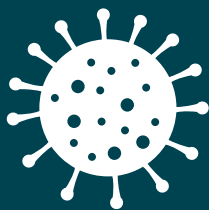
What is more, we take pride in the fact that WPDI did more than merely cope with incoming

obstacles. At every turn of the crisis, the people of WPDI have sought to innovate and rethink how we work and improve our long-term capacity to deliver. We are currently engaged in an organization-wide process to better integrate digital tools into our arsenal, which will allow us to reach even more beneficiaries in the end. In the United States, for instance, we are moving to create an online peace center and an educational game on conflict resolution. As an educational organization, we are also working towards blending online and presential components into our curricula, which will increase our efficiency and outreach, based notably on an innovative partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In order to better address the root causes of fragility in our target communities, we undertook an initiative to mainstream trauma healing and psychosocial support into our various programs, making us an even more holistic organization that fosters resilience both at the individual and collective level. Most importantly, we managed to steer the deployment of two new cohorts of youth peacemakers – one that just graduated in South Africa and another that will complete its training next year in Uganda – which will ensure that their communities have resources to deal with the aftermath of the current crisis. In sum, 2020 has, for all its trials and constraints, been a year of active learning and transformation, creating momentum that I hope we will maintain.

Peace and Light,



Forest Whitaker  
Founder & CEO, WPDI  
UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation  
UN Advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals



1,200+

youth peacemakers have been mobilized to educate people in their communities about COVID-19

75,000+

face masks and other hygienic supplies have been distributed by youth peacemakers



## HELPING VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES BECOME MORE RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

It has been slightly over one year since the emergence of the COVID-19 virus. In that time, some of the world's most pressing challenges – including inequality, climate change, and economic insecurity – have been exacerbated. For WPDI, taking action has been an urgent priority, especially in our efforts to foster greater resilience within some of the most vulnerable communities around the world.

Since the virus began spreading to the countries in which WPDI operates in March, our activities – led by trained WPDI youth peacemakers on the ground in places like Northern Uganda and South Sudan's Equatorias Region – have had a substantial impact. For instance, in the past eight months, more than **1,200** youth peacemakers in those areas have been mobilized to educate people in their communities about COVID-19 and how to keep themselves safe. They have conducted community dialogues, participated in radio talk shows, and distributed more than **75,000** face masks and other hygienic supplies. Their actions have directly reached more than **300,000** people in some of the most remote areas of Uganda and South Sudan, showing how young people – when empowered – can have a remarkable impact within their communities. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has showcased the capacity for resilience and adaptation of our youths; they have been able to learn and tailor their activities based on local situations, in-line with overarching global goals.



*When COVID-19 reached Uganda, I started to help distribute masks, soap, and handwashing buckets throughout my community. When schools closed, I helped tutor children in my community as well.*

*Peace is paramount. We have to have peace so that we can all live together in a harmonious environment. If we can break the cycle of violence, we can accomplish so much.*

*– Linda, a WPMI youth peacemaker from the Omoro District in Uganda*



people have been reached by the COVID-19 informational campaign led by our youth peacemakers in Uganda, South Sudan, South Africa, and Mexico

Our youth peacemakers have demonstrated their versatility in the past few months, and in the coming year, we will seek to harness their enhanced relationships with local stakeholders. This will take form in new partnerships – we have received many requests to work on various topics, including climate change and biodiversity enhancement – as well as training additional youths, supporting more youth-led businesses, and, of course, continuing to educate people about COVID-19.

With our accomplishments this year including a newly graduated cohort of youth peacemakers in South Africa's Cape Flats, another cohort in training in Uganda's Karamoja Sub-Region, and over **160** youth-led businesses around the world supported in 2020, we are ready – and able – to expand our activities and have an even greater impact on the ground.



## REDESIGNING WPDI CURRICULA TO BETTER ADDRESS CONFLICT, TRAUMA, AND OFFER NEW TRAININGS

In 2021,  
WPDI will offer  
a slate of new,  
certified trainings  
at our global  
network of

14

Community  
Learning Centers  
focusing on new  
technologies

WPDI has long provided specialized trainings on conflict and trauma management to youths and others, especially to our youth peacemakers. However, in our nearly eight years of operations, we have noticed the importance of expanding these components, especially because many of the communities in which we work have experienced unspeakable tragedies.

Expanding on the trauma healing activities that we conduct mainly in specific contexts of forced displacement, we have moved to mainstream trauma healing into our programs in the United States and in Africa, notably in South Africa, where our youth peacemakers have been trained by a specialized expert. This has been a rich experience which, in the aftermath of the lockdown, helped them cope with their personal ordeals and prepared them to help people with trauma in their communities.

Another key initiative was to redesign the curriculum for the training of our peacemakers. To this effect, we – in partnership with Conflict Resolution Education experts from Stanford University – worked with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to redesign a curricula that takes into account 'best practices' as well as local perspectives. We have already begun training our latest cohort of youth peacemakers in the Karamoja Sub-Region of Northern Uganda using this new curriculum to great effect, and in the coming months and years, we will adapt it in all of our future trainings.

In addition to redesigning curricula to better address conflict and trauma, WPDI has also entered into a new partnership with CISCO that will allow us – through their Networking Academy initiative – to offer a new slate of certified trainings at our global network of Community Learning Centers. These new trainings will focus on new technologies and include networking, operating systems and information technology, cybersecurity, as well as entrepreneurship and soft skills programs. With these new courses, we hope to train even more people in the coming year.



In a survey conducted for WPDI by our partner, BNP Paribas, in Cape Town,

81%

of respondents reported that they, a family member, or a colleague had experienced violence, impacting their ability to work



## SPECIAL FEATURE: WPDI & BNP PARIBAS SOUTH AFRICA UNVEIL A NEW STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON COMMUNITIES & BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AFRICA

WPDI has long understood that conflict and violence impact the well-being of communities due to our experience working for almost eight years in countries including the United States, Mexico, South Sudan, Uganda, and South Africa. In November, in collaboration with our partners, BNP Paribas and the RCS Group, we unveiled a study that explored the long lasting and far-reaching effects of societal violence on communities and businesses in South Africa.

The groundbreaking study focused on the experiences of people living in 'crime hot spots' in and around Cape Flats, an area in which WPDI began working a little over one year ago. After surveying **100** respondents, the results we obtained were profound: **81%** of respondents reported that they, a family member, or a colleague had experienced violence, causing an impact on their work. Additionally, almost two-thirds of respondents reported being violently threatened in the past. To read more about the study, [click here](#).

Without a doubt, this study provides further evidence of the complexities and challenges faced by residents of communities impacted by violence and conflict. Considering WPDI's model of empowering young people to become ambassadors of change, this insight into the daily violence experience by residents of Cape Town indicate that our activities on the ground have the potential to generate positive long-term change. It is our conviction that youth-based community engagement can positively transform impacted communities. With the December graduation of our newly trained cohort of youth peacemakers in Cape Flats, we are therefore well-positioned to help bring change to one of South Africa's most vulnerable communities.

In the first month of 2021, they will start training groups of young people from their neighborhoods in the Flats. Together, they will undertake a variety of projects to foster peace and sustainable development in the communities. As part of their work, they will continue to raise awareness on key issues pertaining to human rights, such as gender equality and gender-based violence. They will also start working in schools to teach peace to children and adolescents. They have, in sum, a rich agenda ahead of them - and they are eager to start working.



**In 2021, WPDJ  
will digitize our  
training curricula  
in collaboration  
with the  
Massachusetts  
Institute of  
Technology  
and will - in  
partnership with  
the Western  
Union Foundation  
- open a new  
Information &  
Communications  
Technology lab.**

## MAKING THE MOST OF DIGITAL

Like many organizations, WPDJ was forced to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. Normally, we offer in-person vocational trainings to thousands of people per year at our global network of Community Learning Centers. But in March, with many of our centers closed, we quickly moved to offer the same trainings – online.

Soon enough our online vocational trainings became popular, some even more so than previous in-person ones. In Mexico, for example, the Information & Communications Technology course normally offer at our Community Learning Center in Tijuana has a few dozen trainees at a time, all from the local community. However, the online version of the same course attracted hundreds of trainees, from six states throughout Mexico. We have also heard from trainees around the world how our online courses offer more flexibility.

This feedback has led us to plan on maintaining this approach even after the COVID-19 virus is eradicated, expand our vocational trainings in the digital space, and offer a “blended” training approach that seamlessly integrate online and presential teaching modules. Not only will we offer the existing trainings online; we will also launch new tools, such as mobile applications and educational games, to future trainees. In the United States, for example, our Domestic Harmonizer Program will soon launch a virtual ‘peace’ center for middle school students.

These kinds of developments will ensure that we remain forward-looking and reach more people than ever before. In the coming year, in partnership with the Western Union Foundation, we plan to open an Information & Communications Technology lab at the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement that will transform the learning experience of our beneficiaries. We are also working closely with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to design a blended approach tailored to the needs of trainees and ensure that the trainings we offer online and in the classroom reach more people and help them learn better. Thanks to these partnerships, and others, we are well-positioned to continue to grow and expand our online presence in 2021.

# RENEWING & BEGINNING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

WPDI would like to thank all of its partners for their assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We want to especially note the support of our new partners, which include UNITAR, CISCO, and the University of Southern California, and announce the renewal of partnerships with Princeton University, Bank of the West, Verizon, and the Education Above All Foundation.



# OUR PARTNERS



# WPDI IN 2020

**400,000+** PEOPLE REACHED AND IMPACTED THROUGH OUR PROGRAMS WORLDWIDE, INCLUDING:



**14** COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS IN SOUTH SUDAN, UGANDA, SOUTH AFRICA, AND MEXICO HELPED COMMUNITY MEMBERS ACCESS FREE EDUCATIONAL COURSES, THE INTERNET, BOOKS AND COMPUTERS, AND PARTICIPATE IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES.



WPDI'S PROGRAMS ARE ADVANCING **11** OF THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**300,000+** PEOPLE IN UGANDA, SOUTH SUDAN, SOUTH AFRICA, AND MEXICO WERE EDUCATED ABOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS IN A CAMPAIGN LED BY WPDI YOUTH PEACEMAKERS.



**160+** INCOME-GENERATING COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN SOUTH SUDAN, UGANDA, SOUTH AFRICA, AND MEXICO EMPLOY THOUSANDS OF VULNERABLE YOUTHS.



**75,000+**

REUSABLE CLOTH FACEMASKS WERE CREATED AND DISTRIBUTED BY WPDI YOUTH PEACEMAKERS TO VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES IN UGANDA, SOUTH SUDAN, AND SOUTH AFRICA.

**3,500+** STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS WERE TRAINED IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES, SOUTH AFRICA, AND MEXICO.



**6,000+** PEOPLE TOOK WPDI-DESIGNED VOCATIONAL COURSES - BOTH IN-PERSON AND ONLINE - IN TOPICS LIKE CONFLICT RESOLUTION EDUCATION, INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY, AND BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP.



**1,300+** YOUTHS PEACEMAKERS HAVE BEEN TRAINED AND CERTIFIED AS TRAINERS OF TRAINEES IN SOUTH SUDAN, UGANDA, SOUTH AFRICA, AND MEXICO.

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