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# FOREWORD

We are particularly proud to issue this newsletter featuring youths from our diverse programs who have been invited at international events to showcase the work that they conduct every day for their communities on behalf of WPDI. These youths have been with us for years, learning and applying skills in peacebuilding and entrepreneurship to serve their communities as drivers of positive transformation. Most of them started their lives facing immense hurdles created by conflict and poverty and joined WPDI because they had, at times from early childhood, a desire to overcome these hurdles and make the world a better place.

These youths are the true engine of WPDI, which cannot be understated as we prepare to celebrate our tenth anniversary next year. With over 800,000 people reached in the last five years alone and more than 1.3 million people since 2012, we have been able to help dozens of communities on their path to peace. In ten years, our partners, our beneficiaries, and our staff have jointly helped create a strong platform for transformational change, perfectly illustrated in the accomplishments of the youths featured in this newsletter. Taking inspiration from them, we have just finalized a new strategy for the next ten years that will expectedly help us strengthen our capacity to tap the potential of the young women and men who live in vulnerable and violence-affected areas.

This is a momentous time for everyone at WPDI, which our Founder/CEO aptly captured in saying ***“Standing at the threshold of a new period with high ambition, we face the same uncertainties as any other organization. But we are aware of one thing: It can be done.”***

**Caroline Descombris,**  
Executive Director of WPDI

# LOOKING BACK AT 2021

Despite the constraints that COVID-19 imposed on our activities for the second consecutive year, WPDI has nevertheless continued to operate, thanks to the dedication of its staff and youths who carry our mission for peace and development in often difficult places. We are proud to take the opportunity of this last newsletter of the year to present our readership with a visual of our accomplishments for 2021. This infographic is merely about numbers, but we hope they convey the true scale of the work that our teams accomplish across our countries of intervention.



## 131 schools

hosting our CRE program (96% of the annual target) and 19,235 pupils and students trained (95% of the annual target).



## 85,295

## participants

in activities and training in our 14 CLCs. It's above the annual target (73,155).



## 299 businesses

currently supported. It's 100% of the 2021 annual target (298).



## 135,000 people directly reached

by WPDI activities in total. It's beyond the annual target of 130,000 people.



## 159 community dialogues

held by our ToTs (108% of the annual target) with over 23,600 participants and

**1,461 Community Leaders** trained in mediation and peacebuilding





# BROADENING THE SCOPE OF OUR PARTNERSHIPS TO STRENGTHEN OUR CAPACITY FOR ACTION



## United Nations: Strengthening Our Peacebuilding & Entrepreneurship Programs in Eastern Equatoria

WPDl recently joined forces with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to conduct peacebuilding and livelihood activities in South Sudan's Central Equatoria State, including, to prepare for the peace and reconciliation process, for the benefit of displaced persons and returnees. The two-year project is supported by funding from the United Nations's multi-partner Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF). The objective of RSRTF is to provide strategic financing that, together, lessen the destructive drivers of conflict and help develop more peaceful, and ultimately self-reliant, communities. To achieve this, the fund brings together UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other key stakeholders to pursue opportunities that promote transformational change. This approach is sustainable, inclusive, and community driven, all important factors that WPDl promotes as well.

## L'Oréal Foundation: Promoting the Livelihoods of Women in Uganda and South Africa

In line with our heightened priority on gender equality and women's empowerment, we are proud to announce a new partnership with the L'Oréal Foundation, which has gained a strong reputation as promoters of women's rights and empowerment. The Foundation will support our women's livelihood and scholarship programs at the refugee settlement in Uganda. They will also support our program in South Africa which aims to deliver business training to **700 women** and support **42 women-led businesses**.

## BNP Paribas: Expanding Our Programs to Seine Saint-Denis, New York, Mexico and Cape Town

Our collaboration with BNP Paribas is expanding! Not only have they confirmed their trust in our work with a renewed partnership in South Africa, but they are also adding support to our work in Mexico, and our future endeavors in vulnerable areas of France, in Seine Saint-Denis, and the United States, in New York City.



## A LOCAL WPDİ-SUPPORTED INITIATIVE GAINS INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AT THE 2021 UN CLIMATE CONFERENCE



# UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE UK 2021

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY



Victor - one of our very talented Youth Peacemakers in Chiapas - was invited to showcase his contribution to climate action as a speaker during the 26th edition of the UN Climate conference (COP26) held in Glasgow, UK, in October. This is a testament to his work supporting indigenous livelihoods through the promotion of environmentally friendly practices. At the conference, he was also able to learn from other youths on how, they, too, are making a difference in their communities. In his words: ***"Attending the COP26 conference was an opportunity for me to learn from many different young people, all working around the world, for the environment. I met professionals who work on brilliant projects, in fields similar to mine. It has made me even more ambitious than before and has fueled my dream of contributing to community-level advancements from an international platform."***

This is not the first time that the project developed by Victor and his brother Jose, another WPDİ Peacemaker, has been highlighted. Indeed his efforts to promote food security and the Sustainable Development Goals were recognized by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and by Mexico's National Award for voluntary and solidarity action. The project supports local businesses by training coffee and fruit producers on organic pest management and fertilizers. Currently the project manages **36** family vegetable gardens, **20** greenhouses for coffee plants, and high quality prime seedlings. Every producer has **1,200** tree plants that will produce at least **20,000 kg** of organic coffee. This is to say that we view Victor's invitation to Glasgow as confirmation of our conviction that the world needs to hear more of such locally designed and managed solutions for sustainable development.

We must also add that, taking a significant step further in their work to support underserved communities of Chiapas, Victor and Jose have succeeded in raising funds to establish a Community Learning Center (CLC) in Mitontic, which will create a second CLC in Chiapas beyond the one we have already in San Cristóbal de las Casas. Be ready to hear more from this incredible adventure in a future newsletter!





# FILMMAKING ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE PEACE AMONG YOUTHS IN SOUTH SUDAN AND UGANDA



Last week, two of our Youth Peacemakers, Aryemo Esther Ambrose from Uganda and James Yata Ambrose from South Sudan, travelled to Doha, Qatar, to attend the WISE Summit 2021 as Youth Advocates for EAA and WPD and share their experience in a filmmaking training that was made possible by the Education Above All Foundation and the Doha Film Institute.

An international platform to ***“promote creative thinking, debate, and purposeful action in the education sector”***, the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) is a unique place to prepare the future of education, allowing innovators of all backgrounds to showcase their work and learn from each other. It is in this spirit that our youths were invited to speak at a session entitled ***“South Sudan & Uganda Youth Film: Peacebuilding Through Their Eyes”***.

A few months back this year, Esther, James and 25 other youths from Uganda and South Sudan participated in an online training to learn about filmmaking and documentaries, with the German cinematographer Marcus Zaiser. After nine weeks of intensive training and group work, the trainees were able to create seven short films to tell stories about peacebuilding in their communities. These films were screened during the session and received great remarks from the other panelists, including Ms. Fatima Al Rumaihi, Doha Film Institute's Executive Director, Ms. Majisola Sonoiki, African Films and Arts Foundation's Founder, and Mr. Richard Hoffman, WPD South Sudan's Country Manager. All panelists appreciated how these short documentaries were a genuine testimonial of what peacebuilding looks like on the ground and all the different forms it can take to change someone's life.



# PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR ALL AT THE WORLD EXPO IN DUBAI



As a Global Youth Ambassador, Mary was invited to apply as a speaker at the Dubai Expo 2020. After a competitive selection process, Education Cannot Wait and the 100 Million Campaign program selected Mary to be a speaker on Girls Education in Emergency Settings. Truth be told, few people may have more credentials than Mary to address such issues. Mary is South Sudanese and has spent most of her life as a refugee at the Kirandongo Refugee Settlement in Uganda. She joined our youth leadership program in the settlement at its inception in 2017, growing to become a very talented peacemaker. She has been remarked in particular as one of our most effective and inspiring youth trainers in the field.

Indeed, education has always been a chief concern for this exceptional young woman. Since her childhood, she has fought to get an education, facing and overcoming hurdles that would feel unsurpassable to most people of her age. Thanks to her efforts and tenacity, she eventually managed to study Journalism and Communication at the University of Makerere in Uganda – an accomplishment that must be gauged against the fact that only 3% of refugees go to university according to the UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency.

At the Expo, Mary shared her experience as an advocate for education in emergency settings during a one-day event focusing on “SDGs/ Bringing knowledge and Learning to the world”, in the session: “How do we learn?”. This event highlighted the importance of leaving no one behind, building bridges to higher education and beyond and lifelong learning, among other issues related to access to education. As a panelist, Mary detailed her educational experience that she described as a “journey of strength”. She also stressed the importance of play and psychosocial support as part of a holistic approach to education. As a trainer, Mary also discussed lifelong learning challenges she has identified. In her experience, parents are not always aware of the need for education before primary school. Mary explained that it is therefore essential to raise awareness on this issue, especially during school shutdowns as a consequence of COVID, since children before the age of six are unable to use digital devices to engage with school activities.



## PREPARING THE UN NAIROBI SYMPOSIUM OF 2022 FOR THE REINTEGRATION OF FORMER CHILD SOLDIERS



Another of our exceptional peacemakers, Emad Rajab Said, has recently received international recognition for his work as a WPDI Trainer of Trainees (ToT) by being invited by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, a UN entity with which WPDI has been in partnership for many years. Rajab arrived at the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement from South Sudan at the age of nine after a journey of two years that he undertook alone after his parents had him flee his home village for fear that he would be abducted and forced to become a child soldier. Rajab's life is a story of ordeal and resilience - and a story of how satisfying the desire of a child for education can transform not just his life but also that of the community. Today, Rajab is one of our most active and inspiring young leaders who never shies away from taking initiatives to help the community, either by organizing Community Dialogues or reaching out to local populations to educate them on COVID-19.

It comes as no surprise that Rajab's work has garnered international attention as manifest in the invitation to the Nairobi Symposium that the Office of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict extended to Rajab to share perspectives on child soldiers reintegration, a topic of which he has a very good understanding. Rajab is currently taking part in preparatory events that will lead to the Nairobi Symposium that will be organized in the same city in 2022 to strengthen the role of the international community in the reintegration and rehabilitation of former child soldiers. Several of the activities that are part of WPDI's Youth Peacemaker Network were highlighted during the sessions.

Participants also discussed how to extend and replicate WPDI's work in other countries. Rajab presented WPDI's current programs and explained how this work is in support of the reintegration of former child-soldiers in their communities.





## OUR TOTS ARE REPRESENTING THEIR COMMUNITY AT A NATIONAL LEVEL IN UGANDA



Magong Andrew, one of our Youth Peacemakers, was invited to attend the Steering Group meeting of the Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) held in Kampala, on December 8 under the joint aegis of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), two important WPDI partners in the daily conduct of our programs in the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement. Magong is a former child soldier from South Sudan who currently lives in the refugee settlement. As a Youth Peacemaker for WPDI, he has been able to develop skills and train others in conflict management and peacebuilding. Participating in this initiative was a unique opportunity for our youths since this groundbreaking forum gives a voice to refugees in the national decision making process of Uganda. Local issues and concerns are first raised locally, through consultations. They are then brought forward during national quarterly meetings where attendees also provide feedback on refugee response plans and initiatives. Magong showcased his work and raised issues related to education, health, livelihood, and job opportunities for refugees, helping other participants understand better the value of empowering youths as solution-bearers, notably in the context of refugee settlements.



## OUR CEO AND FOUNDER ACTIVE AND RECOGNIZED FOR HIS HUMANITARIAN WORK



This past quarter has also been an intense period of advocacy, events, and recognition for Forest Whitaker. In November, he went to Paris, France, to participate in the Paris Peace Forum, an event which brought together numerous heads of state and international organizations, business leaders, representatives of international civil society, and other key global stakeholders to advance concrete solutions to the enormous challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. He participated in a panel discussion moderated by CNN's Melissa Bell, with Melinda French Gates, the Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation, and Elias Lukwago, the Mayor of Kampala, Uganda.

While he was in Paris, Forest Whitaker was also awarded the title of **Commander in the French Order of Arts and Letters** by the Government of France, in recognition of his work as a socially engaged artist and as the Founder and CEO of a humanitarian organization.

Furthermore, Forest Whitaker had the honor to open the high-level ceremony to celebrate UNESCO's 75th anniversary, attended by more than 20 Heads of State and other artists. As a UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, Forest Whitaker delivered a keynote where he highlighted the great mission of UNESCO, its past achievements but also the importance of continuing the work, together, ***"to make the world a better, more beautiful place"***.

Lastly, in December, Forest Whitaker received the **German Sustainability Award** in recognition of his advocacy on environmental and social issues and fight for positive change. The award was celebrated on German Sustainability Day at Europe's largest convention focusing on sustainable development, in presence of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission.

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