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Foreword

In this Fall 2021 newsletter, we have sought to capture vivid illustrations of one of WPDI's basic tenets: That peace is not just a state of affairs characterized by the silence of the guns, but also, more fundamentally, a set of attitudes and behaviors that value nonviolence, openness, and dialogue.

Peace, in other words, entails a culture of outreach and advocacy that is organic to the work of everyone at WPDI. Our youths and beneficiaries at large are our partners on the ground and the foot soldiers of our outreach strategy. A key responsibility they have is to contribute to the projects we undertake to inform and educate local communities about important issues, such as COVID-19 prevention, or to disseminate peace values and entrepreneurship skills even in the most remote places.

But if the culture of peace that we seek to promote is to prevail, the echo of their voices should not be confined to their own localities. To ensure that their work receives proper attention among wider audiences, we also strive to have them participate in international events so they can be WPDI's advocates. It is not without pride, thus, that we regularly see some of our most talented youth address global audiences. When enrolled as advocates by our partners, they always demonstrate an outstanding capacity to describe their situations, showcase their work, and, especially, call upon world leaders to tap the immense energy of youths in the service of peace and sustainable development. Their advocacy work has become a unique complement to the efforts carried by our CEO and Founder to promote values of peace and help spark a global movement to promote the Sustainable Development Goals.

Everyone at WPDI is, indeed, committed to doing their part to make peace happen. This newsletter highlights this dimension of their work. We hope you are as inspired by it as we are.



EMPOWERING YOUTH PEACEMAKERS AS ADVOCATES FROM THE GRASSROOTS



88,000
facemasks are being created by WPDI-trained youths for residents of the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement



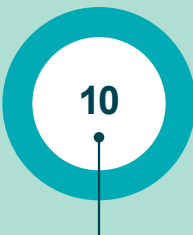
339
youths are being trained to join a grassroots peace force in Cape Town

Over the past three months, WPDI's Youth Peacemakers have been hard at work to foster peace and transformational change in some of the world's most vulnerable communities. In Uganda's Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, **90** peacemakers and trainees in the Arts & Crafts course we offer to the community have partnered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to create **88,000** reusable cloth facemasks for both the refugee and local host communities. In South Africa, our cohort of Youth Peacemakers have begun conducting workshops to train **339** other local youths, helping build a grassroots peace force that will work to bring about change in Cape Town's Cape Flats neighborhood. In South Sudan, our Youth Peacemakers are working with other young people in the Equatorias region to help spur youth entrepreneurship, while in Mexico's Chiapas state, two Youth Peacemakers are undertaking efforts to build a new Community Learning Center to help local people gain knowledge, new skills, and come together.

WPDI's Youth Peacemakers have been active on the international stage as well. In late July, Mary Valentino, from the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, was invited to participate in the Global Education Summit, organized by UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank Group. Designed to address the state of education around the world and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the event brought together thousands of youths, thought leaders, and other key stakeholders to discuss how future education systems can and should be transformed so as to have a greater impact and prove more resilient in the face of future crises.



Ajwok Mary Valentino



WPDI Youth Peacemakers have been selected to become Youth Advocates under a new partnership with the Education Above All Foundation

At the summit, due to her extensive work as an educator at the settlement, Mary was asked to virtually participate in a panel discussion titled “Reopening the Future: Prioritizing Pre-Primary Education.” Mary spoke about her experience working with WPDI and the impact quality education can have on young people, emphasizing how – if presented with opportunities – young people like her can have a tremendous impact on their communities. She told them how ***“thanks to my education, I am able to give back to my community by conducting activities like peace dialogues, by teaching Conflict Resolution Education in schools, by advocating for people around me, and by helping other refugees heal past trauma ... My story makes me wonder about how much more of an impact we could make if every young person was given a chance to discover their potential. There is power in young people if the right investments are made.”***

In another exciting development, in August, **10** of our Youth Peacemakers from Uganda and South Sudan were selected to become Youth Advocates under our partnership with the Education Above All Foundation (EAA). As WPDI-EAA Youth Advocates, the 10 peacemakers will be trained and gain skills in leadership and peacebuilding so they can become even more impactful agents of change in their own lives, communities, countries, and regions. This means that they will be able to train more pupils in schools, lead more effective advocacy campaigns, and hold additional community dialogues, among other activities. They will also serve as key voices from their respective communities in an aim to foster greater understanding with the rest of the world.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE: A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO SPREAD THE MESSAGE



To recognize the International Day of Peace this year, WPDI's teams in the United States, Mexico, Uganda, South Sudan, and South Africa held a variety of events, all designed to bring together their respective communities in celebration of peace. To kick off the festivities, our staff and Youth Peacemakers in South Africa held a cultural dance for community members in Cape Flats. Many people attended and participated in a dialogue about the importance of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence afterward.

A similar activity was held Uganda's Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement later that day. There, settlement residents gathered to participate in a discussion about the origins of the International Day of Peace. They also created posters describing what peace means to them, which were later presented as part of a larger campaign in the settlement. In South Sudan, WPDI held an event in Yei River County that was attended by hundreds of youths, students, and government officials. It featured peace songs, discussions about peacebuilding, dances, games, and other interactive activities. Participants - especially youths - were urged to play their parts in assuming the responsibility that peacebuilding requires, with the Hon. Cyrus Aggey, Yei River County's Commissioner, telling the crowd that ***"We need to plant love into our hearts. Let us forgive one another, reconcile, and live together in peaceful coexistence."***

Our teams in Mexico and the United States held events that focused on asking participants what peace meant to them. In Mexico, WPDI held a widely popular virtual peace forum, which featured prominent leaders



in the country's peacebuilding field, like Alejandro Natò, the renowned mediation expert. Hundreds of people participated in the event, which was broadcast live via Zoom and Facebook, and participated in a robust conversation about what peacebuilding means in our current times. Meanwhile, in Southern California, WPDI's Domestic Harmonizer Program team held a competition for middle school students at Walker Jr. High School, who were asked to create art pieces depicting what peace meant to them. The students submitted many moving pieces, a few of which are included here.





CHAMPIONING THE VALUES OF WPD ON THE GLOBAL STAGE: FOREST WHITAKER'S ADVOCACY WORK



Throughout recent months, Forest Whitaker has remained active in his roles as WPD's CEO and Founder, the UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, and as a Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Advocate.

In June, he addressed the Open Debate of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on the issue of children and armed conflict. He was invited to share his experience and perspective at the invitation of the Council's Chair, the President of the Republic of Estonia, H.E Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid. At the open debate, Mr. Whitaker called on the United Nations (UN) and its member states to do more to rescue and reintegrate children and youths in conflict-impacted areas – especially for girls. He also reflected upon and provided examples of how, when empowered, young people in some of the world's most conflict-impacted areas can spark remarkable change in their communities. The Open Debate examined these issues within the scope of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, seeking to rally more governments and non-governmental organizations behind this universal cause.

Later in the summer, Forest was recognized by the University of Southern California with the Robert Redford Award for Engaged Artists. Awarded at a ceremony celebrating the 75th anniversary of the USC School of Dramatic Arts, the event recognized Forest, who graduated from the school in 1982, as an actor, philanthropist, social activist, and UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation. In his virtual remarks at the ceremony, Forest evoked the many memories he developed while at the School of Dramatic Arts and USC more widely.



"I can still remember the joy on my mother's face when I was accepted, as she beamed with pride at this prestigious university recognizing my talent as well," he said. "As I walked around campus that first year, I felt a tremendous sense of opportunity and possibility... The faculty here taught my classmates and I that while we existed as individuals, our greatest successes as artists would come from our capacity to channel our talents... This showed my classmates and I how to look outside ourselves, and see how deeply our choices connect us all, in a truly interconnected world." He closed his remarks with a call to action to the event's attendees: "Through your art, or through your life, take a chance or a small step toward how you think our society can evolve into something greater – because when those individual shifts are viewed collectively, they can change everything."



In September, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres renewed the term of Forest Whitaker as a UN SDG Advocate for another two years. He joined a diverse group of leaders who are to use their voices and knowledge to help the world reach the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, including President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of Ghana, Her Majesty Queen Mathilde of the Belgians, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar, His Highness Muhammad Sanusi II, Richard Curtis, Hindou Ibrahim, BLACKPINK, Graça Machel, Dia Mirza, Kailash Satyarthi, Edward Ndopu, Brad Smith, Valentina Muñoz Rabanal, and Jeffrey Sachs.



PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS

WPDI is pleased to announce the renewal and launch of several new partnerships that strengthen our efforts to build a culture of peace in vulnerable communities around the world.

In the United States, **Bank of the West** and **Verizon** have renewed their support for WPDI's groundbreaking Domestic Harmonizer Program (DHP), which aims to empower middle school students and their teachers with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to make their schools - and their communities - more peaceful places. With these partnership renewals, the DHP will expand to other schools in the Southern California area, reaching thousands of additional students, educators, and school administrators.

Meanwhile, in South Sudan, WPDI and the **United States Embassy** in Juba have recently launched a new partnership to connect schools and students in South Sudan and the United States. Through this partnership, students from **14** schools in South Sudan's Equatorias region will hold monthly virtual meetings with students from three schools in Southern California. With the meetings designed to help spark conversation and understanding, this project will surely connect hundreds of youths via a global bridge.

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