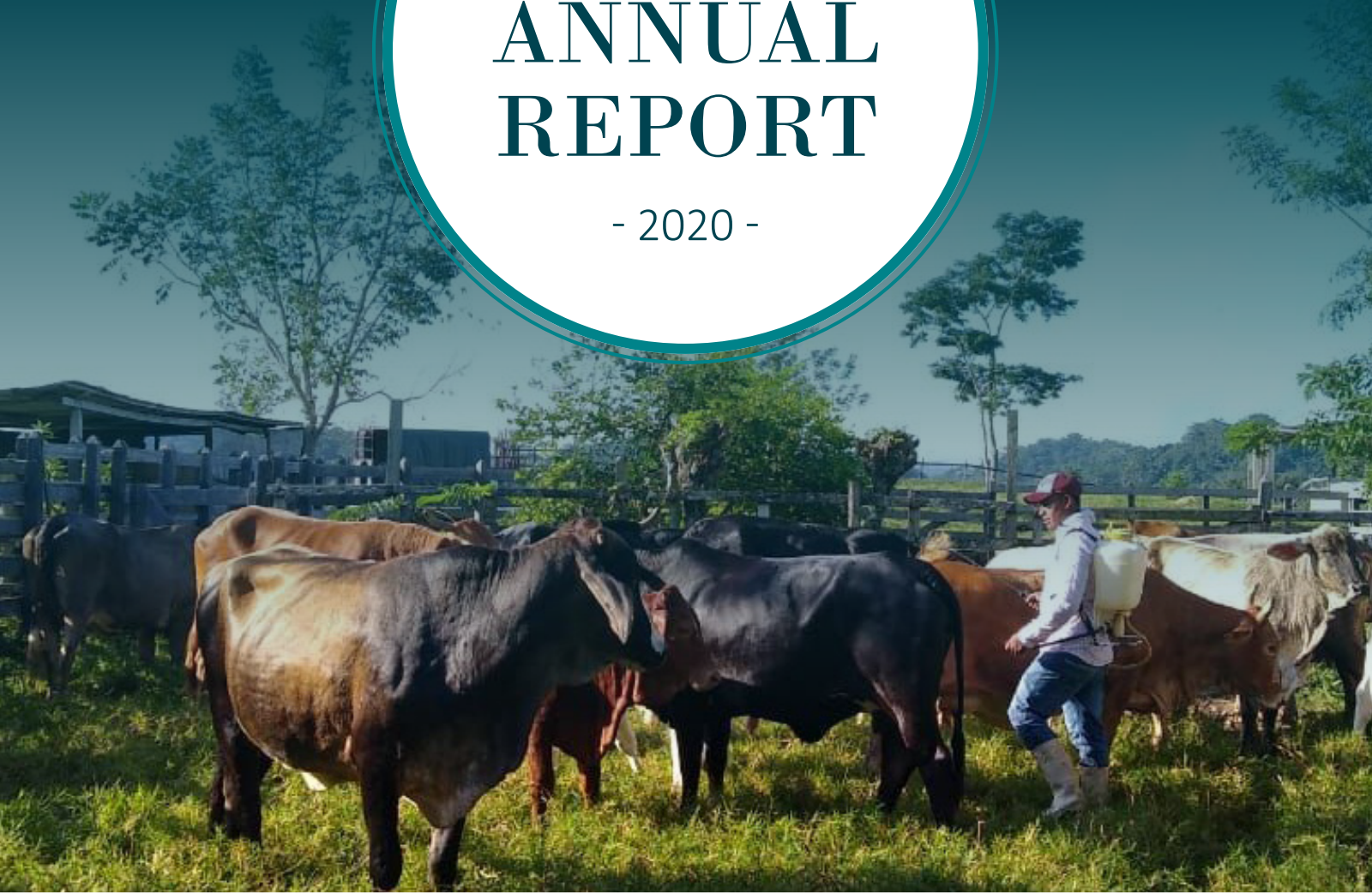


MEXICO ANNUAL REPORT

- 2020 -



WHITAKER
PEACE & DEVELOPMENT
INITIATIVE

www.wpdi.org



TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	RIISING TO THE CHALLENGES POSED BY COVID-19 IN MEXICO
05	FACTS & FIGURES
	CHIAPAS
07	OFFERING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES & OTHER ACTIVITIES ONLINE IN CHIAPAS STATE
09	YOUTH PEACEMAKERS WORKING TO CURB THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN THEIR COMMUNITIES
11	SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURIAL INITIATIVES LED BY WPDY YOUTH PEACEMAKERS IN CHIAPAS STATE
14	VÍCTOR, A WPDY YOUTH PEACEMAKER, CONTINUES TO IMPACT HIS COMMUNITY
	TIJUANA
17	YOUTH PEACEMAKERS WORKING TO CURB THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN THEIR COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT TIJUANA
18	OFFERING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ONLINE
20	CONDUCTING VIRTUAL PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES IN TIJUANA
21	FOSTERING A CULTURE OF PEACE IN SCHOOLS
22	CONCLUSION

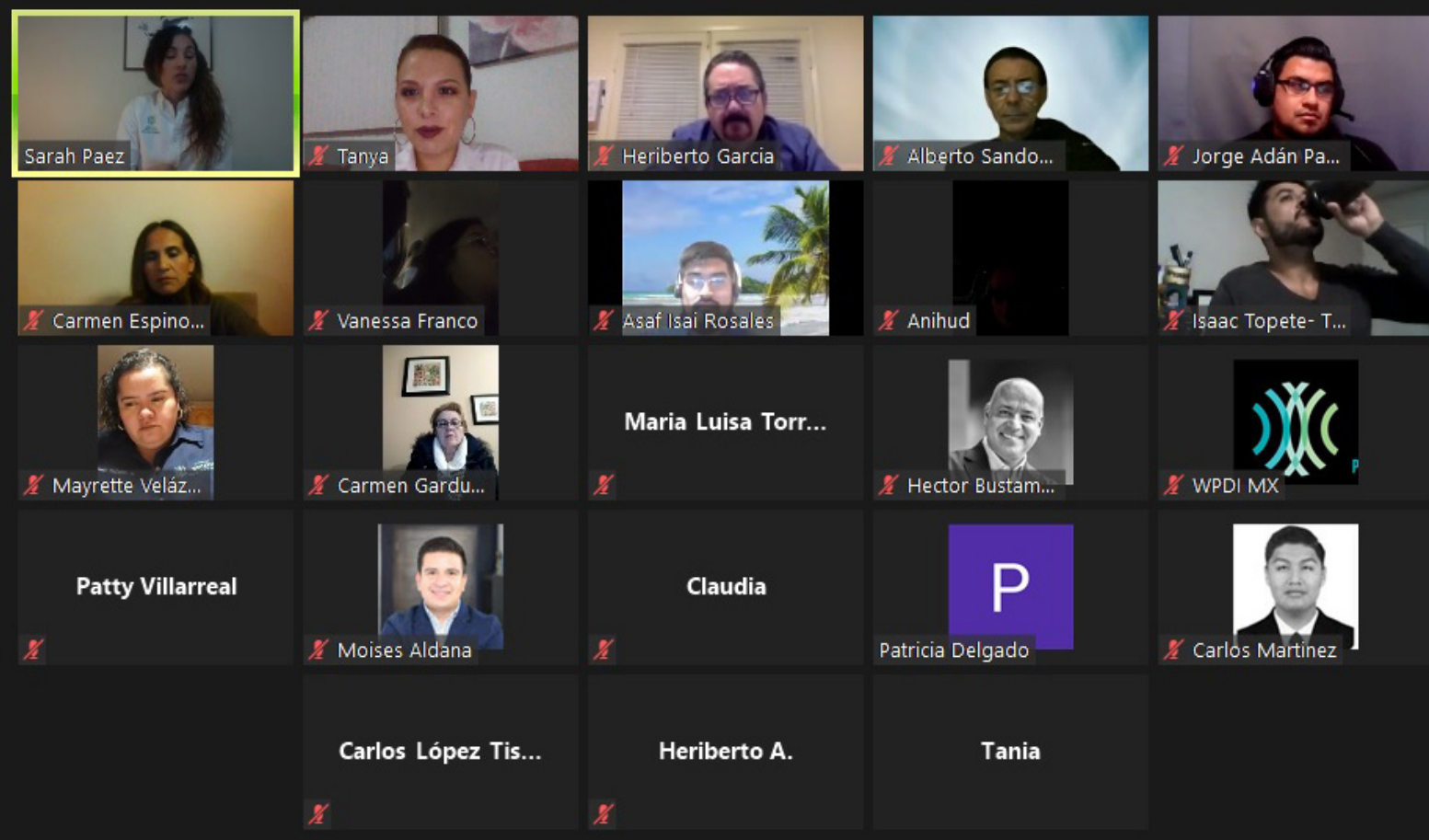
RIISING TO THE CHALLENGES POSED BY COVID-19 IN MEXICO



Even before the World Health Organization (WHO) designated COVID-19 to be a global pandemic on March 23, Mexico started to experience the impact of the virus. Despite the implementation of a national lockdown by the Government of Mexico on March 23, the country has been hard hit by COVID-19, with close to **1.2 million** officially infected and nearly **110,000** deaths to date.

Various portions of the country have felt the impact of COVID-19 in different ways. In rural Chiapas, which experienced its first official cases of COVID-19 as far back as January, residents have struggled to access healthcare and information to cope with the pandemic. Meanwhile, in the urban metropolis of Tijuana and the surrounding state of Baja California, more than **4,500** people have died thus far from COVID-19. Even within the next context posed by the virus, preexisting issues, including high unemployment, rising violence, and a lack of educational opportunities, still exist.

To continue our efforts to meet these challenges, WPI had to adapt our operations in both places. We could not afford to let COVID-19 undercut our efforts to foster peace and sustainable development in Chiapas state and Tijuana. In accordance with national laws and regulations, we immediately closed each of our Community Learning Centers to the public in both places and postponed all of our in-person activities within their surrounding communities, including those under our Cinema for Peace, Conflict Resolution Education in Schools, and vocational trainings for students as well as members of the public.



After consulting with WPDI's partners and our staff, youths, and beneficiaries on the ground, we concluded that offering our vocational courses online was the best way to continue our work in the community, as the closure of educational facilities fostered great need. By partnering with local schools, Baja California's Human Rights Commission and state prison system, as well as other organizations, we are now offering Conflict Resolution Education, Information & Communications Technology, and Business & Entrepreneurship trainings online, and more than **1,700** trainees enrolled in these courses. We also designed specialized trainings for specific groups, including educators, children, and currently incarcerated youths. In view of this expansion, we plan to further increase both the number and scope in 2021 to enhance our capacity to serve our target communities and their members.

FACTS & FIGURES

WPDI's work to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Mexico's Chiapas state and the city of Tijuana has reached more than **85,000** people.



WPDI conducted online Conflict Resolution Education and Information & Communications Technology trainings for more than **700** educators at primary and secondary schools in Chiapas and Tijuana.



Over **1,700** people registered and attended free vocational courses – both online and in-person – over the course of the year.

More than **750** people were direct beneficiaries of the three youth-led businesses supported by WPDI in Mexico's Chiapas state.

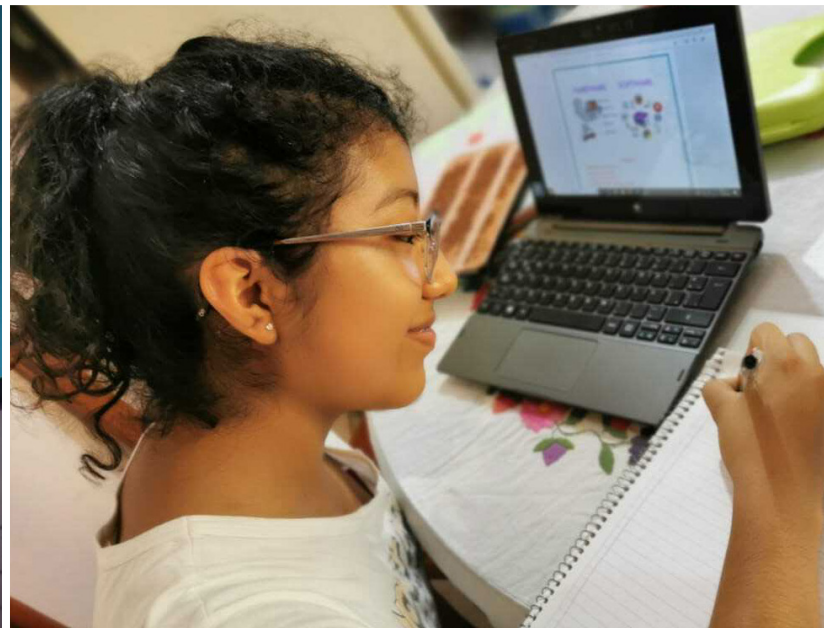
WPDI is training **60** currently incarcerated youths in Conflict Resolution Education at two juvenile centers in Tijuana as part of their rehabilitation program.

WPDI trained **25** members of the Baja California State Human Rights Commission in Conflict Resolution Education.

WPDI launched a pilot program to train **11** children in Information & Communications Technology in Chiapas state.



OFFERING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES & OTHER ACTIVITIES ONLINE IN CHIAPAS STATE



When Mexico entered into a nation-wide lockdown on March 23, WPDI's team in Chiapas immediately took steps to adapt by continuing to offer free educational courses to the community – online. As Chiapas has one of the lowest development indexes in all of Mexico, we have found that the courses – especially our ones in Information & Communications Technology and Business & Entrepreneurship are even more relevant, and popular with the public, than usual.

This fall, WPDI launched two specialized trainings for the immediate community within Chiapas state. One, titled “Peace Practices in Pandemic Times”, aimed to help people find peace within themselves. The course was launched after community members came to WPDI to request help: as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, many were feeling distraught and frustrated. The second course was a workshop for educators in Information & Communications Technology, designed to help them succeed in virtual education practices. The two six-week courses attracted **380** trainees in total, demonstrating the interest and need within the community.

In 2020, 507 community members in Chiapas completed WPDI's online vocational training courses, with another 71 completing course in-person before the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

““

I am thankful for the training and activities because I know that, moving forward, I will use what I have learned.

– Dulce, a 20-year-old Information & Communications Technology trainee

In addition to offering vocational courses, WPDJ continued to collaborate with our partners to develop new digital initiatives. Working closely with Ericsson, we designed a pilot of an Information & Communications Technology course for children, which proved promising. A full course will follow, in early 2021, as will a new online marketing course for owners of small businesses. Our team also participated in the annual meeting and peer-to-peer clinic of the North American chapter of the Prevention of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding Network. In that meeting, WPDJ staff were asked to conduct a presentation on the involvement of youths in peacebuilding activities, with a follow up meeting planned in 2021. WPDJ was also invited to represent the North America chapter of the network's youth working group, illustrating the prevalence and interest in our work and model.

““

The online course was excellent. I learned how to use new technologies and figured out that they were not as complicated as I thought. The WPDJ trainer was kind, patient, and professional. Thank you for the opportunity.

– Edith, a school teacher in Chiapas

YOUTH PEACEMAKERS WORKING TO CURB THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN THEIR COMMUNITIES



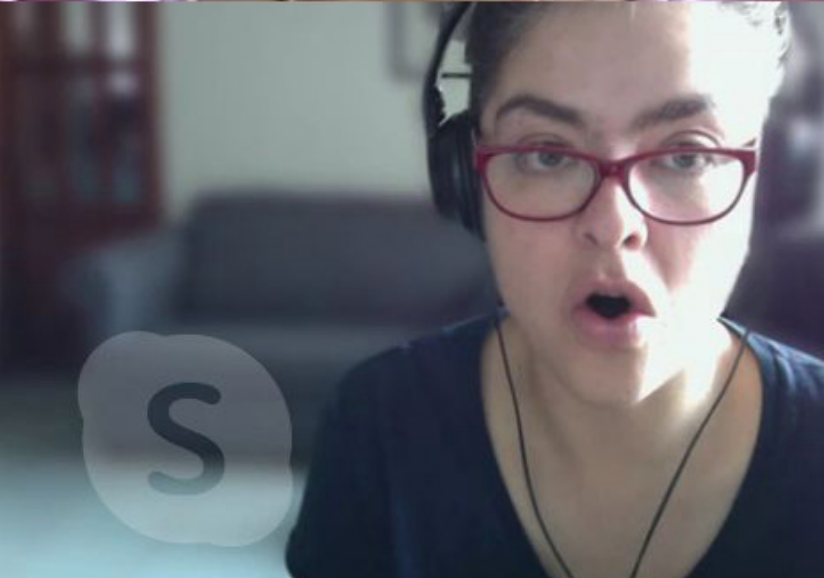
In addition to the free educational courses that we offer to community members in Chiapas state and beyond, WPDl's network of youth peacemakers in communities throughout Chiapas state have mobilized to play an important role in keeping their communities safe. As communications networks in the state are lagging and verified information can be hard to come by, the efforts of our youth peacemakers have mainly concerned keeping their communities informed about care and preventative measures they can take to help curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

33,667 people have been reached by WPDl's network of youth peacemakers in Chiapas state, who have been mobilized to help inform their communities about ways to curb the spread of COVID-19.

“

In April, I started working with the Ministry for Gender Equality to develop COVID-19 messages to inform indigenous communities about COVID-19. In doing this work, I used what I learned with WPDl to create empathetic, informative messages.

– Silvia, a WPDl youth peacemaker



Throughout the year, the youths worked to disseminate accurate and up-to-date information, including factsheets relaying information backed by international organizations like the World Health Organization, they have taught people how to effectively wash their hands, practice safe physical distancing, and dispel rumors and disinformation. Respecting these measures, they went house-to-house to educate people in their communities; they also disseminated information over social media, radio, texting, and by calling people directly in their communities. Regardless of the medium, the youths provided this information in a culturally-relevant way, considering that their communities are mostly rural, indigenous, and some are non-spanish speaking.

This pivot shows the versatility of our trained youth peacemakers and the key role they can play – when empowered – within their communities.

SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURIAL INITIATIVES LED BY WPDI YOUTH PEACEMAKERS IN CHIAPAS STATE



WPDI's Business Bootcamp program aims to foster entrepreneurship in the vulnerable communities where we operate. Mostly geared towards young people, this platform serves both to provide aspiring entrepreneurs with key business skills and to support the development of small businesses through grants and monitoring services. The initiative resulted out of the understanding that development and successful peacebuilding are closely intertwined; for peacebuilding activities to be successful, communities must be able to create businesses and jobs. After all, both play an empowering role and help create and sustain livelihoods.

In Chiapas state, WPDI currently supports five business projects launched by members of our cohorts of youth peacemakers. In total, the projects directly impact 750 local people.



Nueva Palestina Community Garden

In 2020, three youth peacemakers from the Nueva Palestina community - Ruddy, Adelaida, and Franklin - created a community garden on land owned by their families with the goal of alleviating food insecurity in their community. The youths conducted their first harvest of organic produce in the late fall, and although their project is still in its infancy stages, they plan to expand and include more young people so as to benefit their community's food security.

Ejido Villa las Rosas Community Garden

Rosa, another youth peacemaker from the Ejido Villa las Rosas community, also launched a community garden in the second half of the year to help address the issue of food insecurity in her community. She founded her organic garden to support nutrition and food security in her community. Currently, the produce she harvests directly benefits **30** families in the community, and she is currently hoping to partner with community groups to expand the garden further as well as provide area farmers with technical training and organic fertilizers.

Healthy Food Production

Launched in 2017 by José and Victor Sántiz and based in Mitontic, Chiapas, Healthy Food Production aimed to train **70** community members in agro-ecological techniques to improve the quality and quantity of locally produced food. Since then, the project, which was awarded a national award in December 2019, has grown and now provides **350** people in the Mitontic community with produce. In 2020, the project acquired chickens and now also provides eggs to people in the community.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, José and Victor have managed to stay in contact with community leaders and provide cleaning and food supplies for the most vulnerable families in their community. As soon as the emergency is over, these young leaders will put the second phase of their project back in motion. Next year, they plan to establish a Community Learning Center in Chalam, Mitontic, where local youths can participate in training and education programs. This new center will benefit an estimated **500** young people per year.



Amatenango's Pottery: Mujeres Colawal

Amatenango's Pottery was launched in 2017 by Andy Bautistain Amatenango del Valle, Chiapas. Its mission is to improve the design and quality of Amatenango's traditional pottery, introduce artisan women to marketing strategies, and open new distribution channels for their products.

The project has grown over the years and consolidated into a women's collective named "Mujeres Colawal" (Thank You Women). In 2019, with WPDI's support, the collective built a small shop in downtown Amatenango, where the **15 families** (approximately **75** people) that participate in the collective sell their pottery. Currently Andy is leading the collective to raise funds in order to cope with the paralysis in the tourism sector caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

Pedro's Hairdressing

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Chilón, Chiapas, Pedro – a WPDI youth peacemaker – and his brother decided to open a hairdressing business. Pedro had recently graduated from WPDI's business skills training and felt confident about starting a business in the middle of a sanitary crisis.

Currently, Pedro and his brother are working on expanding their business. They have started offering free haircuts for children as a marketing strategy, which has brought in other clients. In Pedro's words, ***"We manage to make enough to pay rent and provide for ourselves. On some days, the business is slow, but we're happy to be working together."***

VÍCTOR, A WPDI YOUTH PEACEMAKER, CONTINUES TO IMPACT HIS COMMUNITY



In December, the Governor of the State of Chiapas, Mr. Rutilio Escandón Cadenas, presented WPDI youth peacemaker Víctor German Sántiz García with a State Youth Prize in recognition of his important community work.

After completing his training with WPDI in 2017, Víctor has worked hard for the benefit of his community. Together with another youth peacemaker and WPDI's support, he launched the Production of Healthy and Nutritious Food Initiative. They did so based on their observation that many indigenous families in Chiapas – one of Mexico's poorest states – suffer from malnutrition, especially in the state's rural areas where access to food can be extremely limited. The project began with the establishment of a community garden, at which indigenous families were trained how to produce vegetables, tend to livestock, and learn about nutrition. Since the project's launch, **70** people have been trained in agro-ecological techniques and **350** community members are



supported with produce. In only two years, the initiative has become self-sustainable and, in addition to being recognized by the Mexican government, it has also received international recognition from the United Nations Development Program for its work to promote food security and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition to developing the Production of Healthy and Nutritious Food Initiative, Víctor has launched several other initiatives to empower youths in Chiapas. His latest project, the Play-Learn-Enterprise, seeks to promote a culture of peace through the prevention of drug use and violence through art, culture, sports, training, and entrepreneurship. Next year, this initiative is projected to benefit an estimated **500** young people per year.

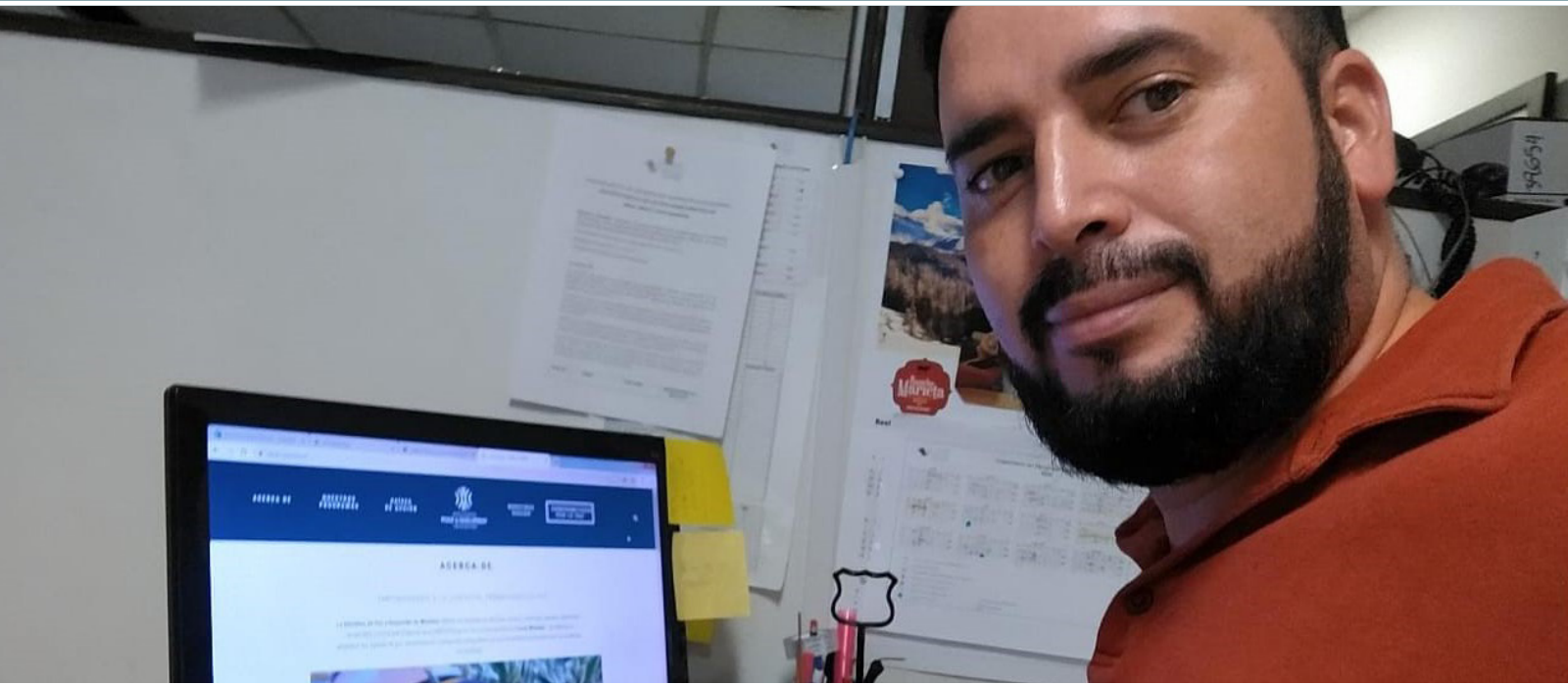


These achievements have greatly impacted his community indeed, and Victor continues to serve as an exemplary WPDJ youth peacemaker. In his own words at a recent award ceremony, ***“being a young leader represents an opportunity to serve as an agent of change and contribute to transform the reality on the ground to help us all exercise our rights as individuals. Leadership means continuing to inspire more people and empower the future generations. For me, WPDJ has been a fundamental component of my career and it has provided me with skills, capabilities, and aptitudes that I will continue to use in my future work with young people.”***



Tijuana

YOUTH PEACEMAKERS WORKING TO CURB THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN THEIR COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT TIJUANA



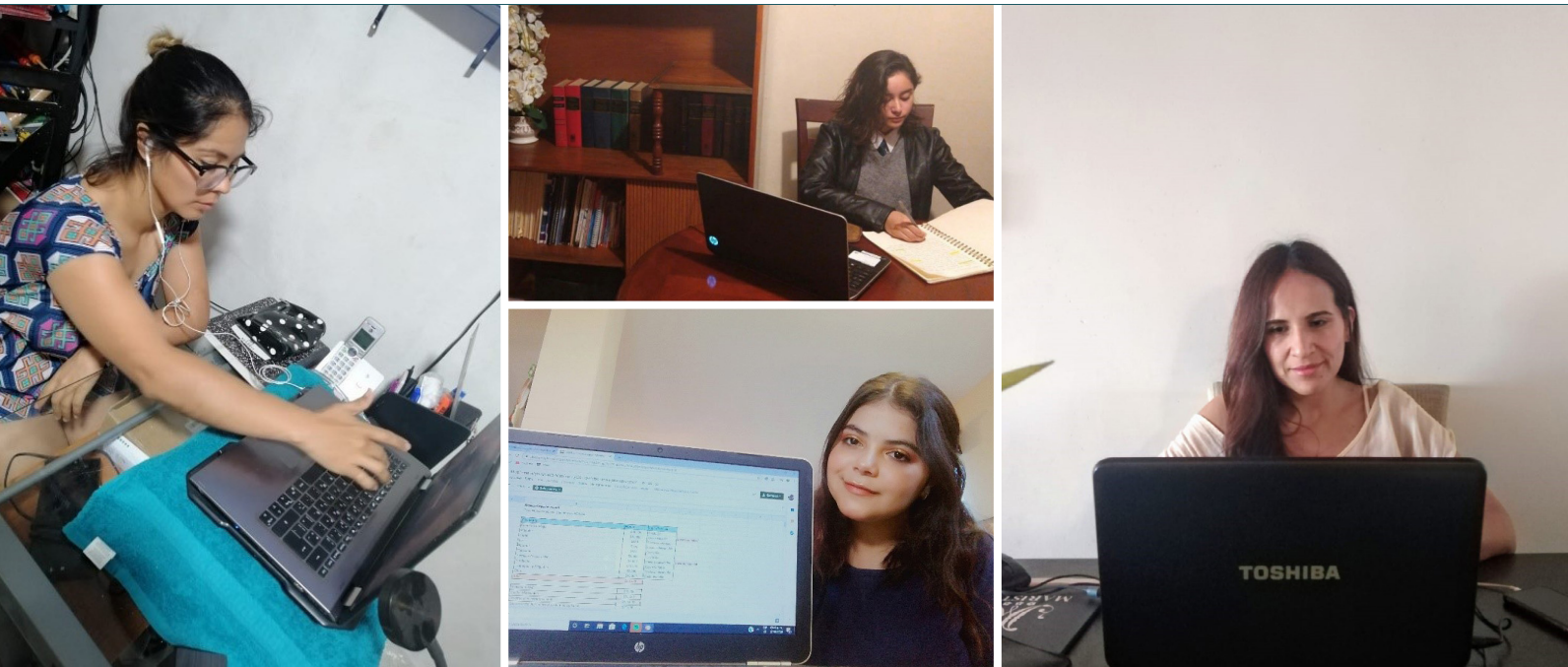
As in Chiapas, the pandemic had and is still having an impact on communities throughout Tijuana. Many of our youth peacemakers and trainees come from some of the city's most vulnerable places, which tend to not have access to resources or up-to-date information to help keep them safe from the spread of COVID-19.

Close to 52,000 people have been reached by WPDI's network of youth peacemakers in Tijuana, who have been mobilized to help inform their communities about ways to curb the spread of COVID-19.

To help address this issue, WPDI's network of youth peacemakers in Tijuana have been mobilized to play an important role in keeping their communities safe. This mainly consisted of alerting community members of guidance issued by the World Health Organization and other authorities through factsheets containing verified information. They have also engaged with the public over social media and similar platforms to dispell rumors, clarify myths, and answer questions.

Over the past few months, WPDI-trained youths in Tijuana have taught people how to effectively wash their hands, practice physical distancing, and stress the importance of staying at home as much as possible. Throughout the year, their work reached nearly **52,000** people.

OFFERING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ONLINE



In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing national lockdown, WPDI's operations in Tijuana have adapted dramatically. While we normally offer educational courses at our Community Learning Center for members of the public, the closing of the center led us to adapt and shift our trainings to an online format. By doing so, we were even able to diversify and expand the content of these courses to better suit the needs of trainees.

“

I have been taking WPDI's Information & Communications Technology trainings since 2019. They have helped me grow and improve myself. My wife and children are now taking the trainings and what they have done for us is amazing. My wife was even able to obtain a new job thanks to her newfound skills!

– Orlando, a former Information & Communications Technology trainee



Since March, the courses attracted hundreds of new trainees, allowing us to fulfill our mandate of fostering peace and sustainable development at a new scale: In 2020, we offered Conflict Resolution Education (**438**), Information & Communications Technology (**211**), and Business & Entrepreneurship (**160**) trainings online to **809** new trainees. These online courses have brought new beneficiaries from organizations like Baja California's Human Rights Commission, two groups of students at Lazaro Cardenas High School, and even a cohort of teachers from primary and secondary schools who wanted to take our Conflict Resolution Education course together. Most recently, we also entered into a partnership with Baja California's State Prison System and will soon begin offering trainings to **60** incarcerated young men at two juvenile prison facilities. By teaching them about Conflict Resolution Education and Business & Entrepreneurship, we aim to help them prepare for their future lives, once they leave prison.

“

I have loved learning about business and want to have my own business some day. But I didn't know where to start. The trainings that WPDJ offers at my school have helped me decide what I want to do with my life. I am working hard to become a business woman.

– Dilsa, a Business & Entrepreneurship trainee

CONDUCTING VIRTUAL PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES IN TIJUANA

In addition to our vocational training courses, WPDJ held other online activities to engage youths and other community members. To mark the International Day of Peace in September, our teams in Chiapas state and Tijuana collaborated with the Baja California State Commission of Human Rights to hold a five-day virtual celebration of peace. Over the course of the week, almost **4,150** people attended the event online. Meanwhile, in November, we started hosting regular virtual Community Dialogues in Tijuana to connect our peacemakers with others in their communities who are working to foster peace and positive change. The first dialogue was attended by dozens, including members of our first generation of youth peacemakers, who helped plan for future dialogues.

Even as we expand our course offerings and other events, WPDJ is continuing to receive requests for additional ones. This has presented us with new opportunities to connect with the communities we seek to serve, and in the coming year, we will launch new activities – including online trainings designed for children as well as for migrants, both of which will begin in early 2021.

“

In these troubled times, community work, support, and education are important tools with which to disseminate peace and community development. WPDJ is a great ally and has worked hard in the community. We look forward to working closely with them in the future.

*– Eduardo Valtierra,
head of the Tijuana Economic Development Council*

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF PEACE IN SCHOOLS

No one is born with the natural capability to successfully mediate conflicts or foster peace in their community. Rather, these are key skills that can be learned by all people. Therefore, teaching Conflict Resolution Education principles to young people - primary and secondary school students - is a core aspect of our work.

Under more normal circumstances, WPDI works at four primary and secondary schools in Tijuana, teaching hundreds of students about peace, conflict, and mediation. Before the pandemic led schools to close in Mexico, we successfully trained **120** students in Conflict Resolution Education.

As with our other programs, the COVID-19 pandemic forced WPDI to offer our Conflict Resolution Education sessions online. While we were not able to train additional students, we did train two cohorts of educators in Conflict Resolution Education. These **357** primary and secondary school teachers learned how to manage conflicts virtually, integrate peacebuilding principles into their lesson plans, and gained tools to help them be better virtual educators.

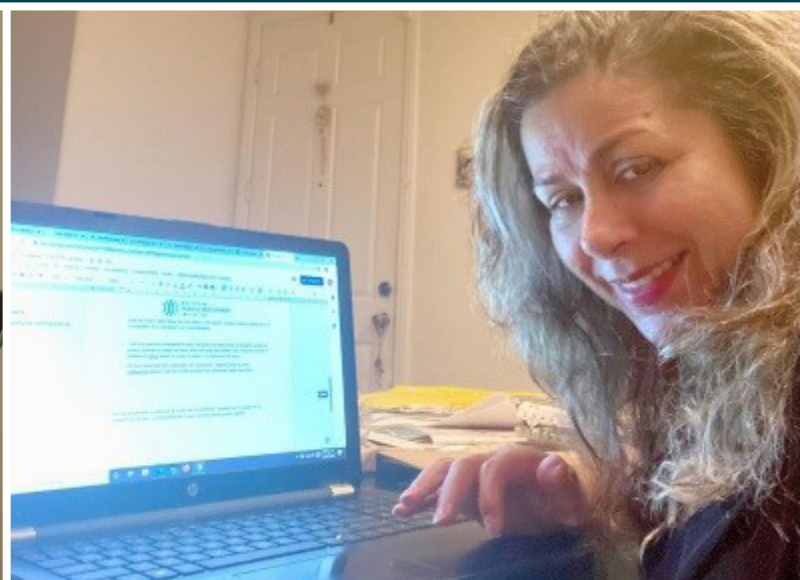
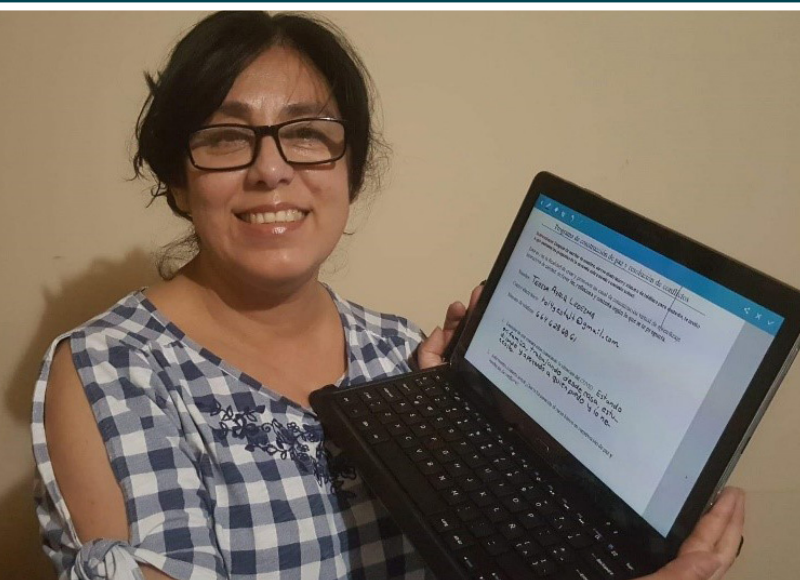
WPDI has trained **357 primary and secondary school teachers online in Conflict Resolution Education during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

“

This training was fabulous and gave me many new tools to implement in my classroom. I look forward to teaching my students about inner peace!

– Lucina, a school teacher in Tijuana

CONCLUSION



Before the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted Mexico, WPDI was on-track to exceed its planned goals in the country for 2020. However, we quickly had to adapt to the new normal. After we closed our Community Learning Centers in Chiapas state and Tijuana at the end of March and halted our public and in-person activities, we decided that the best way we could move forward was to digitize the vocational courses we normally offer in-person.

Thanks to the support of our partners, including the Telmex-Telcel Foundation, the Western Union Foundation, and Ericsson, we were able to overcome early difficulties, develop technical infrastructure and expertise, and even expand our impact. By harnessing technology and tools like Google Classrooms, Zoom, and social media platforms, we have reached thousands of people and increased the interest of the public in the vocational courses we offer. The impact has truly been profound: In 2020, more than **1,700** people registered and attended our courses in Conflict Resolution Education, Information & Communications Technology, and Business & Entrepreneurship, compared to 376 in 2019. We even offered specialized ones, such as Information & Communications Technology to groups of educators to help address a need for them to be trained in distance learning activities, as well as a pilot program to teach children about Information & Communications Technology. Due of this extraordinary level of demand and the potential it presents to expand the scope and reach of WPDI's work, we plan to launch new course offerings in these areas in the coming year.

While COVID-19 is still impacting Mexico and presents many challenges for WPDI's operations in the country, it has, against all odds, constituted an opportunity to extoll the potential of our model. Thanks to the flexibility of our model and the hard work of WPDI staff, WPDI remained and remains fully mobilized and committed to providing support for vulnerable communities of Mexico as they strive to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, we plan to work – in close concert with our partners – to have an even greater impact.



Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WPD)

1000 North Alameda Street | Suite 104

Los Angeles, California 90012

United States of America

