



WHITAKER
PEACE & DEVELOPMENT
INITIATIVE



MEXICO

ANNUAL REPORT



2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2022 has been a year of transition for WPDI in Mexico most notably because COVID continued to constrain our operations while inviting us to reflect on how to best tap our capacity to deliver. Despite the limitations incurred by the sanitary crisis, we have indeed continued to adapt and ensure that activities are maintained in the two target locations, Chiapas and Tijuana. As a result, **from May to December 2021, more than 2,200 people benefited directly from the programs' activities, courses and workshops.**

A priority has been to strengthen our blended approach with training courses delivered online in parallel to our in-person courses delivered at the Community Learning Centers (CLCs). Being able to implement the planned programs online has been an opportunity to reach people throughout the entire country, beyond the initial target set for the program. While programs in Chiapas offer slightly different versions of the already available trainings, Tijuana offers innovative courses that address new post-pandemic challenges. The component most affected by COVID-19 is the training of local youth by the Youth Peacemakers at the community level in Chiapas and Tijuana, which could not begin within schedule. We have continued to build the capacity of the Youth Peacemakers in both locations to ensure that the activity can be undertaken when the situation improves.

Overall, our programs have contributed to promote economic development and improve employability of vulnerable groups and increase employment opportunities in Chiapas and Tijuana.



KEY FACTS & FIGURES

2,200+

beneficiaries reached



57%

of our beneficiaries
are women



Community Dialogues



12

community dialogues
conducted

364

community members
reached

85

community leaders trained
in Conflict Resolution

Peace Education in Schools



222

Primary school pupils
trained

22

teachers
trained

Business Bootcamp



1

business plan competition
was conducted in Tijuana

3

winners
are receiving backstopping support and funding

160

direct beneficiaries
from the businesses we support (founders and employees)

1,500+

people
indirectly benefit from these businesses

Incarcerated Youth Program



30

detained youths trained
in Conflict Resolution and Business & Entrepreneurship

Youth Peacemakers



35

active Youth Peacemakers in
Mexico

5

refresher trainings conducted
in ICT and Business

Community Learning Centers



2

established Community
Learning Centers

1

in construction, launched by
two Youth Peacemakers

1,085

participants in trainings

- **733** ICT trainees
- **181** Conflict Resolution trainees
- **80** Business trainees
- **57** Inner Peace (trauma healing) online trainees
- **34** Arts & Crafts trainees

240

beneficiaries of the Cinema for
Peace program

In 2021, WPDI continued to demonstrate the relevance of its action for local communities even as and also because the COVID-19 pandemic maintained its grasp on Chiapas State. This incurred, for example, the maintained closure of educational facilities, which prevented us from implementing our conflict resolution program in schools.

However, by mobilizing our Youth Peacemakers to disseminate information among remote communities, we were able to further demonstrate that our programs have value including in times of crisis. Likewise, we strived to provide as many services as we could to ensure that the local populations are aware that WPDI is determined to carry its mission and contribute to the sustainability of their community in the long term.



Youth Peacemakers Mobilizing Against COVID-19 in Chiapas State

Most rural areas in Chiapas lack access to information on national, let alone international issues, and therefore still ignore much about COVID-19 and how it can be prevented. The risks are thus twofold, since (1) remoteness from information networks increases the exposition of local populations to the virus; and that (2) remoteness from transportation networks, while not preventing the spread of the virus, would make it harder for health services to address the pandemics there, which would in turn, facilitate the spread of a new wave of COVID-19. This twofold risk could impact the resilience capacity of our target communities, thereby falling directly within the scope of our mandate.

As part of our COVID-19 emergency strategy, WPD's Youth Peacemakers joined a local network of doctors, journalists, Catholic church members, and NGO directors in order to exchange information about the rural communities and join efforts to offer support. Knowing that only 16.5% of the Chiapas population has access to the internet, finding a way to share verified and official information with the rural communities, as well as maintaining communication with the young leaders was crucial. Data plans were provided by WPD to all young leaders, so they could connect to the internet with their mobile phones on a regular basis. We also provided emotional support to all our young leaders which faced diverse challenges during this emergency, including COVID-19 infection and the loss of loved ones.



This was the first initiative of its kind and for this reason it was highlighted by national and local media such as La Jornada and Chiapas Paralelo.

María Alejandra Elizabeth Olvera Carbajal

Con ella se busca informar sobre el derecho universal a la salud en las comunidades para que los pueblos lo ejerzan con conocimiento, así como hacer frente a la desinformación que se puede traducir en percepciones fundadas en datos falsos sobre las vacunas, promovida t en el marco del proceso electoral que se vive en las comu

Yabal JK'an julel yu'un xka'a te chamel COVID sbil-e?

1 Te julel-e ja'me awu'un

Sok majtanalame.

Sp'neime jumatik Mexico ta sak'in la yich' manel. Me la awa'kaba ta julel-e ma'yukme ya yich' k'anel avoto ta stojol jme'tik-tatik.

2

Ja'i ka'lli to, ma'yuk to nix k'oem ta bayel jtejk lumetik te chamel COVID sbil-e

...ma jichuk, ja' te chamel-e yakalime a'tel, ja' jich te yal k'ime xjul ta lok'el.

Te julel-e lek, ma'ba chopol te' yu'un te ya stak' skoltaotik yu'un ma kich'tikbel ik'el ta snail postawanej-a.

3

Bayel muk'ul limetik ta sp'ejel balamalik, bayel la smarik te julel-e, te' yu'un te ay banti yantik muk'ul lumetik te ma'yuk la staikis a te poxil-e.

Te jumatik Mexico-e lanix staj jte'buk te poxil-e, te' yu'un te ja' sabal ma yichuk julel te ja'teletik, jpostawanejtek soknixakte jme'tik jatik te ma'ch'a yijix xch'elike, mael ja' bayel jakal lejalek yu'un te chamel COVID sbil-e.

4

Te julel-e ja'me jun poxil te ya yak'be yip te jchanutik, yu'un ma sitasotik a te chamel COVID sbil-e.

Tsajbilme, bayelme jme'tik jatik la yich' sbabi, te' yu'un te patli ajul ta jtojolitke.

Te julel-e ja'me awu'unik, k'o'ejame ta awo'tanik, jichnixan ja'me snojpil awu'unik teme ya ak'an akanaan aba-e sok teme ya ak'an akanaan te awuts' awalal-e.

5

Te julawaletika, ja'me sbabi xba yulata' te lum k'inal te banti ma'ba muk' te slumale-e, ta spamal te jumatik Mexico. Te woje-cha'je-jame ala walaipat (k'itabotik), ja' jich te ya'itike ja'me sbabi ya yich' julel te jme'tik jatik te muk' xch'elike. Te binti ya yich' joi'kol-e-jame ja'me yu'un te ya yich' nabel te jay tul yich'ok julel te jme'tik jatik'antike, mayuk me ya yich' tuntsel ta stojol politica.

Resistencia española: Instituto de Estadística y Geografía
Resistencia española: Instituto de Salud

Victor, a WPDl Youth Peacemaker from Chiapas, Attends the COP26 in Glasgow

In the fall of 2021, Victor - one of WPDl's talented Youth Peacemakers active in Chiapas - was invited to take part in the COP26, the 26th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention on Climate, which was held in Glasgow, United Kingdom.





The invitation came in the aftermath of his receiving national and international recognition for an income-generating project that he developed with a fellow Youth Peacemaker, Jose, under the aegis of WPDI: the Production of Healthy and Nutritious Food Initiative. In a time when the international community is more and more concerned with the challenge of responding to the socioeconomic development of underserved groups while preventing negative impacts for the climate and the environment at large, the initiative of Victor and Jose was recognized as an example that can be emulated across countries and continents. Their goal was indeed to help reduce the problem of malnutrition among indigenous people of Chiapas while ensuring that they have the capacity to address this challenge in a sustainable and long-term manner.

Their project began in 2017 with the establishment of a community garden, at which indigenous families were trained on how to produce vegetables, tend to livestock, and learn about nutrition. Today, some 300 families are working under the initiative and hundreds of people have been able to purchase affordable and nutritious food. The initiative had become self-sustainable within two years and was recognized by the Mexican government as well as the United Nations Development Program as a model to promote food security and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this light, the invitation to participate in the COP26 and showcase the project has been a landmark not just for Victor or Jose, but also for WPDI in its ambition to demonstrate to the world that young people can and should be mobilized to help address the challenges of their communities.

This capacity of youths to strive for making a difference could be read in Victor's words on his way back from Glasgow: ***"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."***

Strengthening Communities through Peace Education

To help build a culture of peace in Chiapas, WPDI's Youth Peacemakers work with local public schools to conduct trainings in Conflict Resolution Education for students and teachers alike. While the COVID-19 pandemic has made achieving this goal difficult since all schools were closed, in April, we reactivated our Peace Education program by training groups of children outside of schools, working in coordination with local authorities in some of the state's most vulnerable communities.

For eight weeks, 11 of our Youth Peacemakers held basic-level Conflict Resolution workshops in 11 communities, including Nueva Palestina, Ejido Villa las Rosas, Petalcingo, Yajalón, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, and San Cristóbal de las Casas.



222 children participated in the program and learned how to be active listeners, practice empathy, meditate, and mediate conflicts that they may encounter in their personal lives. As many have been living at home for the past year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the trainings incorporated a special emphasis on family dynamics to help the youths adapt to a new normal.

Our Youth Peacemakers delivered Conflict Resolution Education workshops to 222 children in their communities while schools were closed.

Both the Youth Peacemakers and the children themselves told us that the trainings had been very impactful indeed. Karina, a Youth Peacemaker, noted that ***"All the children were very open and reflective during the workshops. I was impressed by how they felt confident to share their feelings and what each took away from the trainings. I think this served as a true moment of coexistence and learning."*** Sofia, a secondary school student, spoke about how ***"I discovered I can do many things. I want to help my friends when they feel like they cannot do something. I want to keep finding peaceful solutions to conflicts."***



Improving Access of Local Communities to Skills and Connectivity through our Community Learning Centers in San Cristóbal and soon in Mitontic

As the state with the lowest developmental index score of Mexico, Chiapas has immense needs in terms of knowledge and skills conducive to lasting peace and sustainable development. Meeting this need is one of the reasons why we had established a Community Learning Center in the heart of San Cristóbal de las Casas, the state's capital, in 2018.



As per our strategy, the purpose of the center is to offer free civic and vocational training courses in topics including Information & Communications Technology, Business & Entrepreneurship, and Conflict Resolution Education. The center also hosts important community and cultural events, such as Community Dialogues or Cinema for Peace screenings, which contribute to strengthening our presence in the area.

The relevance of having such a center in remote areas was not missed by two of our Youth Peacemakers who took the initiative to establish a new one directly in their hometown of Mitontic, which will expand the scope of our services to the indigenous communities of Chiapas. Even if our activities were reduced in 2021 due to COVID-related constraints, we are nevertheless certain that more and more individuals of Chiapas will benefit from the work of WPDI in the future.

During a short period of low prevalence of COVID-19 cases during the summer, we were able to offer at our CLC short summer courses on personal finances and saving, ICT, self care for children, music and other Arts & Crafts. We were also able to hold Cinema for Peace Sessions. WPDI's office and CLC in Chiapas continued to operate mainly on online mode.

However, during the rest of the year, we continued the initiative we built in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic started: we conducted weekly training sessions online. We delivered courses on Conflict Resolution, Business & Entrepreneurship and ICT, as well as the course we started in 2020, "Peace Practices in Pandemic Times".

In 2021, 388 trainees graduated from online trainings and 63 trainees benefitted from in-person trainings at the CLC, totalling a number of 451 trainees

	Course	Number of trainees
Online trainings	Conflict Resolution Education	13
	Business & Entrepreneurship	24
	Information & Communications Technology	294
	Peace Practices in Pandemic Times	57
Summer courses at the CLC	Business & Entrepreneurship	6
	Arts & Crafts for children	34
	ICT for children	23
Total trainees		451

“I like how the trainer explains the topics during the course. I really get to understand and I have learned a great deal. The changes we have made in our store are very significant, I have a more structured business now, thank you.

— Atala,
a 30-year-old Business & Entrepreneurship course graduate

“My name is Alejandro and I am 15 years old. I am now in my second semester of high school at COBACH Plantel 11 in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. The ICT course delivered by WPDJ has helped me to better participate in online classes and homework. I have also been able to solve computer related problems in my home.

— Alejandro,
a 15-year-old Information & Communications Technology course graduate

Two Youth Peacemakers Plan to Expand WPDl's Reach Into Remote Indigenous Communities in Chiapas

In the fall, Victor and Jose - two of WPDl's most active Youth Peacemakers in Chiapas - launched efforts to establish a new Community Learning Center in Mitontic, in Mitontic, a remote town located in the Chiapas highlands.

This ambitious move will help us further deploy our peacebuilding and development model to an area home to some of Mexico's most vulnerable indigenous communities. Through the new center, Victor and Jose plan to provide local people with the array of services that WPDl offers at its centers, including access to connected computers (graciously donated by our partner Ericsson) as well as courses in Conflict Resolution, Entrepreneurship, and ICT.





Drawing on their experience with us, Victor and Jose put helping people develop knowledge and skills at the forefront of their transformative agenda, hence the establishment of a Community Learning Center.

As Victor himself told us, ***“Through our efforts, we hope to improve the quality of life of the people in Mitontic by strengthening their identity and agricultural activities, improving their economic livelihoods, empowering women, and including young people so that they can engage in community experiences.”***

In addition, working with the Mitontic municipality, they will expand the scope of their existing social business, “Production of Healthy and Nutritious Food”, which they launched after completing their training with WPDJ. They chose to do so after observing that many indigenous families suffered from a lack of year-round access to nutritious foods. Since the launch of their first community garden, Victor and Jose have enrolled 300 local indigenous families to work on the initiative, helping them learn about nutrition, how to produce organic vegetables, and how to tend livestock. The families have been able to access quality food, save money, and even sell extra produce at local markets, allowing for additional income. It is only fitting that Victor and Jose received recognition for their project from the Mexican government as well as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for their efforts to promote food security and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Through their initiatives and achievements, Victor and Jose have become an inspiring example of the unique potential that empowered young people can accomplish to benefit their communities.

Aiming at Resilience for Individuals and Communities through Trauma Healing Services

At this time of profound national and global crisis, many have struggled with their mental health. Although the COVID-19 pandemic began almost two years ago at time of writing, WPDI's team in Chiapas has continued to see the general population struggling to process experiences of isolation, sadness, depression, anxiety and fear, anger, frustration, and grief amidst the many losses large and small, human and material, that the pandemic continues to relentlessly deliver.

To help address these issues, WPDI developed an online course titled "Peace Practices in Pandemic Times". The course - which offered training in peacebuilding education focused on mental health outcomes - helped support adults with mental peace education and peer support based on mindfulness and psychosocial principles that promote mental clarity and resilience.

57 people completed the Peace Practices in Pandemic Times course





“ I was feeling isolated, stressed, and sad. But, I learned that achieving inner peace is a daily spiritual practice. To take a deep breath, try to smile more, live in the present and let go of the things I cannot control.

— Jose,
a 49-year-old course graduate



“ I learned about the course from a friend who shared some information about the first session and I was intrigued. I like the course's approach, the way it combines neuroscience with yoga and meditation techniques. I especially like how our guide, Kate, runs the sessions, she transmits peace and it gives me confidence that I can control my anxiety. She is very good at listening and giving feedback.

— Luz,
a 58-year-old course graduate

Creating Opportunities for Sustainable Economic Empowerment through Business Bootcamp

WPDI's Business Bootcamp initiative is designed to help support entrepreneurship in vulnerable communities. In Chiapas, this incubation program is geared towards reaching young people, providing aspiring entrepreneurs with training in business skills as well as support in the development and growth of their businesses.

The eight existing WPDI-supported businesses were launched in 2017 for two of them and 2020 for the other six. They are all managed by WPDI Youth Peacemakers. In 2021, we visited all of them to provide backstopping support.

WPDI's program in Chiapas is currently supporting
8 businesses started by our Youth Peacemakers

An Update on Youth Peacemaker-Founded Businesses

Currently, WPDI is supporting eight businesses launched by members of our cohort of Youth Peacemakers there. These include:

Women's Potter Group "Mujeres Colawal", Amatenango del Valle

The project grew over the years and finally consolidated in a women's collective named "Mujeres Colawal" (Thank You Women) to improve design and quality of Amatenango's traditional pottery, introducing artisan women to marketing strategies and opening new distribution channels for their products. The project indirectly supports 75 people.



Ruben's "Butcher shop "Lo Bueno" in Milenio, Pijijiapan

With the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, cattle sales started to drop. Using the business skills developed during his WPDI training, Rubén started a new small business selling organic meat products and vegetables in his shop "Lo Bueno". This initiative has created jobs for local youth and is guaranteeing healthy and sustainable food to the local community inhabitants.





Daniel's Eco-tourism services in Pueblo Nuevo, Tonalá

This project aims to welcome tourists to the region while promoting the conservation of the local mangroves. It has benefited seven other young men. The initiative benefits eight families (30 people approximately).



Olga's Craft Business, Yajalón

Olga is working with three families (20 beneficiaries) producing textiles with embroidery to sell in San Cristóbal. Her project aims to strengthen the textile tradition of local women.



Dany's Craft Business, Petalcingo

Dany started her crafting business with her sister in law. They are working with 35 women also producing local textiles and embroidery selling their products in San Cristóbal, Tuxtla, and Tabasco. They indirectly benefit about 420 people.



Lielman's Craft Shop, Petalcingo

Lielman works with 4 local artists, benefiting indirectly 25 people. Together they opened an arts and crafts small shop.

Pedro's Hairdressing and Photographic Studio

Pedro initially opened a photographic studio, working with schools and governmental bodies in his community. However, due to the low sales of photography, he created a hairdressing salon, with self-taught and practiced knowledge. Now, the successful business offers both services and is well known in the community.



Meet Ruben, a WPDY Youth Peacemaker & Entrepreneur in Chiapas State



My name is Ruben Aguilar and I am a WPDY Youth Peacemaker in the State of Chiapas. Originally, I am from Ejido Emiliano Zapata, a small town of just over 600 people located on the Mexico-Guatemala border in a coastal area.

I joined WPDY because I wanted to learn how to resolve conflicts in my community and help others find peace. Before becoming a Youth Peacemaker, I was the coordinator of a youth soccer team and saw some of the barriers to building peace in the community. But with the training I received from WPDY, I have been able to make a real difference. For example, in the past year, my community was inundated with misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic and whether to get vaccinated or not. With WPDY's support, I was able to get factsheets containing information from the World Health Organization and distribute them to others. Now, people know that the vaccine is free and can help us beat the virus.

In addition to my work fighting the pandemic, I also recently started a business to help people in my community achieve food security. As part of my WPDY training, I learned about Business & Entrepreneurship, and saw that many people here don't have access to organic meat products or low-cost produce. So, I opened a butcher shop, where I also sell produce. Recently, I also purchased an egg incubator, and plan to raise chicks. Many in the community have thanked me for providing these products, which were not available before.

Even though we in Ejido Emiliano Zapata have encountered many obstacles in the past year, we have been able to make progress towards building peace and sustainable development. I look forward to continuing to expand my business and help others get back on their feet.

Disseminating Values of Peace and Dialogue Through Cinema

In observation of COVID-19 safety precautions, in 2021, WPDJ decided to look for open and ventilated places to organize the Cinema for Peace screenings. We also selected rural schools with low prevalence of COVID-19 cases to make sure our activities did not represent a risk for participants.



A total of 240 children and youth participated in six screenings

In addition to hosting a film screening, each event also included a post-film discussion that focused on themes presented in each, such as teamwork, coexistence, or environmentalism, among others.

“ Wherever I walk around, I see trash, trees being cut down and fires. We can take care of the planet by picking up the trash and waste. I liked the movie very much, it's a good one.

— Gómez,
12 years old, participant in the Cinema for Peace
program

“ We have seen people littering and cutting trees. Here we have birds, pigeons and flies. We can take care of the planet by cleaning it and washing it. We liked playing with other kids.

— Paloma and Mónica,
11 years old

Even if the year remained largely marked by the constraints induced by the pandemic, WPDJ managed to make significant progress against its core objective of addressing root causes of fragility in Tijuana.

Beyond the fact that our teams could maintain key programs, including in an online format, our programs in general have confirmed their value in the eyes of important institutions. This was notable in the continuation of our partnerships with the Baja California Human Rights Commission or with the youth detention centers where we have been allowed to strengthen our programs. The same can be said of the invitation of the federal government to have WPDJ participate in its social programs.

Such recognition by a variety of institution is not only a testament to our past accomplishments but also an indication that much remains to be done in the coming months and years as Tijuana remains locked in a number of challenges to peace and development that call for long term and sustainable approaches, such as those heralded by WPDJ.



Mobilizing our Youth Peacemakers in the Service of the Community

While the work of our Youth Peacemakers was inhibited by COVID-19 and associated restrictions in 2021, they still conducted important work within their communities. In the spring, they were invited by the federal government to become the representatives of “Plan Dai” in Baja California state. This plan aims to make sure the community is always aware of what the government is doing to protect and assure the wellbeing of all citizens. It includes a national transparency platform, and in August, all the Youth Peacemakers received training on how to utilize the system. Since then, they have been working with their communities to replicate their training to others.

There are **16 active WPDJ Youth Peacemakers** in Tijuana



“ I am very happy to have been selected to participate in the DAI plan. We are able to communicate with the community once again and it is very motivating to be a representative for WPDJ and for the people of Tijuana. We are forming strong bonds with vulnerable community members who oftentimes feel discouraged and uninvolved.

— Carlos,
1a Youth Peacemaker

“ I know we have not been able to start working with the community yet, but this is a good opportunity to practice public speaking and sharing important information that can later change someone's perspective and even satisfy their needs

— Tania,
a Youth Peacemaker

Disseminating Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Skills

While WPDI had to postpone in-person Conflict Resolution Education courses due to COVID-19 restrictions, WPDI staff still worked hard to deliver virtual trainings to local leaders and other community groups. The training course that we designed for local leaders - including for 24 members of Baja California's State Human Rights Commission - included 12 weekly training sessions and covered topics such as communications skills, identifying underlying needs, and conflict mediation, among others. The course was very well received by the trainees themselves, with one member of the commission, Cara, telling us that ***"The online training was very well designed, with both theoretical and practical materials. I will put into practice what I learned during my work as well as in my daily life."***

A total of **168 people** were trained in Conflict Resolution Education online, including 111 women and 57 men



Strengthening the Capacity of Detained Youths for Autonomous Life

This year, pursuing our program for detained minors, we trained 30 inmate youths at the Ensenada and Tijuana Youth Detention Centers in Conflict Resolution Education as well as Business & Entrepreneurship. The trainings are conceived in particular in view of their return to society, ensuring that they are better prepared to adopt positive attitudes and behaviors and possess skills that increase their employability.

The program is especially relevant for young detainees about to be released since it creates a form of bridge between life in prison and life in society. Those youths who take Business & Entrepreneurship are, for instance, invited to take more advanced courses at the CLC once they are out of the detention center.



The 30 detained youth at the Ensenada and Tijuana Detention centers took the basic and intermediate levels of the "Avientate" training as well as the basic level Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) training. The course was held over the Google Classrooms platform and, because of the lack of connectivity at the Youth Prison, we had to send them pre-recorded videos for the youths to watch. Then, they would send their homework and the trainer would evaluate them.

Graduation ceremonies for the detained youths took place in August 2021. Next year, we will be expanding this program.

**30 youths from the Detention Center graduated
in Peace Education and Business & Entrepreneurship**



“ This CRE training has taught me to be more peaceful and to resolve discrepancies in the best way. It helps you resolve problems through dialogue. Please keep sharing this with more people. Thank you!

A CRE trainee from the Detention Center in Ensenada

“ I like this training because I have gotten to know myself a lot better and I am able to get to know the values I have and others too. I think it has been very interesting. I have learned how to end conflicts. I now know how to fix my problems without physical or verbal aggression. I have especially enjoyed the videos! I would like to encourage people to get involved in this training and reflect. Let's keep on going!

A CRE trainee from the Detention Center in Ensenada

“ I like this training because it helps me prevent conflicts and know how to act when you face one. I think it is very interesting and it has taught me to prevent conflicts. I have learned to relax through meditation. I now know how to resolve my conflicts and meditation helps me a lot. I want to thank you for the time you dedicated to us. I really enjoyed the training.

A CRE trainee from the Detention Center in Ensenada

Celebrating International Day of Peace

While we could not deploy our regular Conflict Resolution Education program in elementary and secondary schools, due to COVID-19, we nevertheless managed to hold activities on International Day of Peace celebration with the "Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey" ("Technological Institute of Monterrey").

This year, we held a live and online event, "Building dialogues for peace", in which experts in the topics of peace, mediation, and community work spoke to 300 participants from WPDI as well as students. The trigger questions were:

- What does peace mean in the community?
- What can we all do to become more involved?
- In your experience, what is the main problem with peace in our region?

The five presenters were Alejandro Natò, world renowned international mediator; Teresa Riquè, Director of the Opera of Tijuana and very well-known cultural promotor; Daño Sánchez, Psychologist, expert in bullying prevention by the University of San Diego; María del Carmen Villarreal, expert in meditation and peacebuilding; Francisco Diez, former WPDI collaborator for Latin America, international mediator specialized in South American conflicts.

The event also provided an opportunity to showcase a video on the work of WPDI as well as one from the Tec de Monterrey school.



Thank you for having "compassion" as a key component in peacebuilding, as spoken by speaker Darío. This teaches us to learn not to obey when it is not the right thing to do. I was deeply impacted. Let's care for our children, my grandchildren. Congratulations on a great event!

— Marines Suares, event participant



Tecnológico de Monterrey
Escuela de Ciencias Sociales
y Gobierno



WHITAKER
PEACE & DEVELOPMENT
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CONSTRUYENDO DIÁLOGOS PARA LA PAZ



Día de Ciencias Sociales por el Día Internacional de la Paz

Alejandro Nató

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Webinar:
Zoom ID:
834 6872 7653

Martes 21 de septiembre de 2021
10:00 hrs. Hora del Noroeste
12:00 hrs. Hora Central
14:00 hrs. Horario Buenos Aires, Arg.

Community Dialogues for Improved Conditions of Peace and Resilience

By conducting virtual community dialogues, WPDJ has been able to continue to strengthen its presence in communities while also positively impacting them. Dialogues offer a safe space where Tijuana residents can discuss issues that negatively impact their communities. The most common conflicts that were addressed in these dialogues included mental health, peacebuilding, conflict mediation, effective communication techniques, and bullying.

7 online community dialogues meetings were conducted by our Youth Peacemakers in 2021, attended by 236 community members. The topics were the following:

Dialog Name	Number of participants
Emotions and Mental Health	30
Identity for Peacebuilding	28
Mediation for Peacebuilding	36
Peace in the Role of the Mediator	39
The Ethics of Communication for Peacebuilding	29
Bullying: What Educators Should Know and Do	38
Restorative Justice and Human Rights	36
TOTAL	236

WPDJ staff also held online dialogues to discuss the role of entrepreneurship in pandemic times. They gathered a total of 105 participants over the course of four one-hour sessions.

“ Thank you WPDJ for being in my life! You have given me more reasons and tools to continue on this path of peace building. That is why my biggest thanks to you Master Sarah and the Whitaker Foundation. We are changing course from what little we do!

Betsy Dessire Fitch Macias, elementary school teacher

A total of 11 online community dialogues meetings were held in Tijuana in 2021, reaching 341 community members.

“ My personal gratitude and inspiration to this Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative, especially for the peacebuilding and conflict resolution programs which have helped me to have a broader vision of how the program helps create a better social environment. I have realized that there cannot be changes if it is not from within each one of us, this group comes with people from different regions and with the content of this program, they let us know how real change can be achieved with shifts in perspectives and paradigms, that we not only wish, but put everything into practice

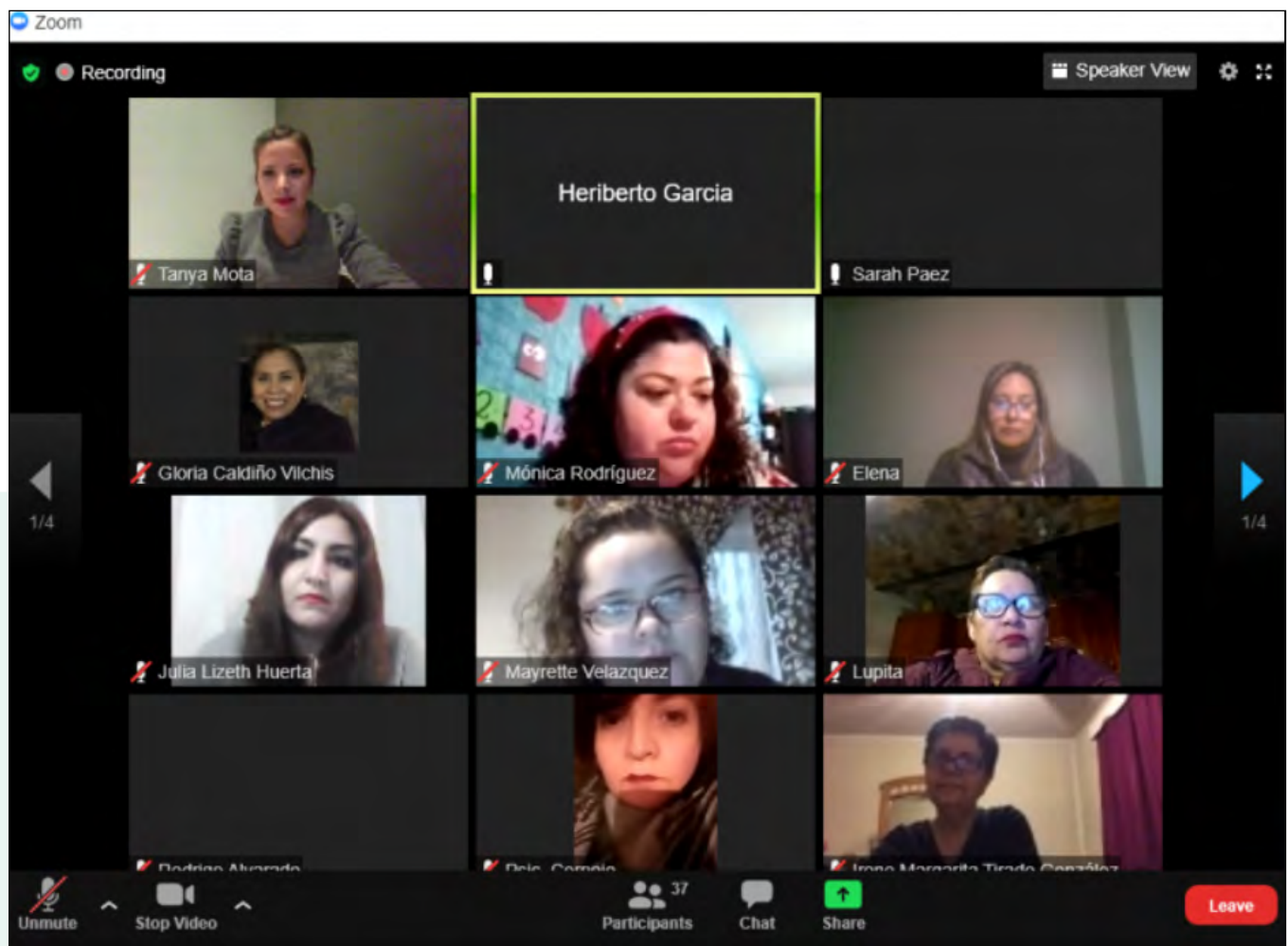
Cinthia Arteaga Romero

WPDJ and Baja California's Human Rights Commission Conduct a Virtual Community Dialogue

In January, WPDJ held its first-ever joint Community Dialogue with Baja California's Human Rights Commission. Focusing on "Restorative Justice and Human Rights" the virtual event brought together 36 participants and special guest Miguel Mora, the commission's director.

While our Community Dialogues normally take place in person, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we adapted our Community Dialogues to take place virtually, as many issues they seek to address have only been exacerbated by the pandemic. January's dialogue – focusing on human rights – was especially prescient, as Tijuana and Baja California have seen increases in cases of domestic violence and other concerning issues.

For over an hour, the 36 participants discussed how –with the pandemic – their community work is perhaps even more important than before. This sentiment was widely shared, with one participant, Clara, telling us that ***"We must have an active role during this crisis ... We must continue to help others."*** Another attendee, Cesar – a first-generation WPDJ Youth Peacemaker, mentioned how important it is to ***"think about the positive ... Human rights is not a game."***



Bringing Civic and Vocational Skills at the Grassroots for Transformative Change

With the WPDJ Community Learning Center in Tijuana closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, we adapted by holding vocational trainings in a virtual format. These trainings - conducted through Google Classrooms - covered Conflict Resolution Education, Information & Communications Technology, and Business & Entrepreneurship.

Thanks to the virtual format, trainees from five states across Mexico were able to participate. They gained knowledge and skills in areas including understanding conflict and its motivations, how to use Microsoft Office Suite and the Internet, and how to identify a business opportunity and design a strong business plan, among others.

Online Trainings	
Course	Number of Trainees
Conflict Resolution Education	168
Business & Entrepreneurship	50
Information & Communications Technology	416





634 community members in Tijuana benefitted from our online training program

“ I have enjoyed this program very much, without a doubt now I know more effective techniques to resolve external conflicts, and serve as a mediator in those circumstances and even be able to resolve my own conflicts by seeking peace within myself through meditation among other techniques.

— Isabel,
a Conflict Resolution Education course graduate

“ The impact the training has had in my life has been very beneficial, because now the process of capturing, putting things in order, searches and identification of products has been easier in my family business during my daily tasks. I am now also able to help my son with his homework!

— Veronica,
an Information & Communications Technology course graduate

“ To start up a business is something that had never been in my mind before, it is now that I am opening my eyes. I see it is convenient for me and it is also important as a future lawyer to have a business I can rely on. It would help me grow and contribute to my community. I took interest in the Avientate Bootcamp this year and I am amazed! The trainer is fantastic and has greatly motivated me to start up a business! The trainings really helped me. I am learning so much that I had no idea about! Now, through “Avientate” I have really learned about business and business plans.

— Dales,
a Business & Entrepreneurship course graduate

Empowering Aspiring Entrepreneurs Through our Business Bootcamp

In December, WPDJ held its first-ever Business Plan Competition in Tijuana. Designed to help empower young aspiring entrepreneurs with the financial and backstopping support they need to grow their enterprises, 16 groups entered into the competition. Ultimately, **three winning entrepreneurs were selected**, impressing WPDJ's review panel with their compelling business plans and enthusiastic pitches; we are confident that each of them have robust potential and will positively impact their communities.

WPDJ's Business Plan Competitions are a cornerstone of our Business Bootcamp initiative, which aims to help young entrepreneurs strengthen their knowledge and skills and create opportunities for them to start successful businesses. Open to former trainees who have graduated from the intermediate level of our Business & Entrepreneurship courses, the competitions offer an emulative space where youths can promote their business ideas and demonstrate their acumen. The successful finalists are subsequently supported by WPDJ and our partners with both financial support and backstopping, including monitoring and evaluation of their progress as well as specialized trainings and networking opportunities.





Since the entrants already had a strong grasp of business fundamentals thanks to their training with us, all the 16 projects submitted in the competition were notable for their quality and relevance. Each was reviewed by the six-member review panel, composed of representatives from WPDI, the community, and our partners which provided feedback to youths. During the review process, the panel whittled down the proposals under consideration, leaving six semi-finalists.

Towards the end of the competition, the six semifinalists were asked to present one final pitch to the review panel. All had taken into consideration the feedback received, which made for tough competition. Ultimately, the judges selected the three finalists they felt had the strongest chances of achieving success. They are as follows:

1. Malbec Beauty Salon, represented by Sandra Karina Nuñez Enciso
2. Cafe Haitiano, started by Dales Louissaint, a Haitain immigrant to Mexico
3. Ruta 1 MX, a travel company founded by Carlos Garcia

With the competition now complete, the three winners are already preparing to start and grow their enterprises. As Dales told us, ***"This city has given me so much and I can't believe I will be able to have my own business! With WPDI's support system, I know I will be successful. I'm excited to help change this city."***



CONCLUSION

While WPDJ admittedly operated under sanitary conditions that prevented us from fully achieving our targets for the year, 2021 nevertheless remains an important year for our program and our youth.

First of all, we are satisfied that we could rebound in the face of adversity - sending to our beneficiary communities a strong message that we will not fail them even in times of constraints. Secondly, we are particularly proud that, again in a context of unprecedented constraints, the work of our teams and youths has received attention from a wide array of stakeholders, ranging from the officials of the detention system of Baja California to the organizers of the COP26 who invited one of our Peacemakers to share his experience with activists from all continents.

Such strengthening of our partnerships with various Mexican stakeholders is all the more relevant for WPDJ that trust being the fuel of peace, gaining more and more trust among these can only bolster our capacity for action in the future - and therefore to better serve our target communities and beneficiaries.



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