

# SOUTH AFRICA REPORT

- 2020 -



WHITAKER  
PEACE & DEVELOPMENT  
INITIATIVE

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
04	KEY FACTS & FIGURES
05	A COMMENCEMENT IS ONLY BUT A BEGINNING
07	MOBILIZING OUR YOUTH PEACEMAKERS TO HELP FIGHT COVID-19
08	BACK TO LEARNING: CONTINUING EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES AT OUR COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER IN ATHLONE
	INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY.....09
	BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSE.....10
11	SPECIAL FEATURE: WPDI & BNP PARIBAS SOUTH AFRICA UNVEIL A NEW STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON COMMUNITIES & BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AFRICA
12	LEARNERS AND PARTNERS
13	PROMOTING PEACE AND RECONCILIATION THROUGH COMMUNITY DIALOGUES
14	FOSTERING A CULTURE OF PEACE IN SCHOOLS
16	AT ITS FIRST BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION IN SOUTH AFRICA, WPDI SELECTS EIGHT PROMISING PROJECTS TO BE LAUNCHED IN 2021
18	CONCLUSION

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WPDI) completed its first year of operations in South Africa in 2020. While the last twelve months have included many challenges in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have nevertheless successfully completed the training and graduation of our inaugural cohort of **42** youth peacemakers in the country, conducted WPDI's inaugural Business Plan Competition in December, and have been able to resume many of our core activities in the second half of the year while observing strict safety precautions.

The impact of COVID-19 has undoubtedly been disproportionately felt in some of South Africa's most historically marginalized communities, including in Cape Flats, where WPDI operates. With South Africa's official unemployment rate at **43%** and its official youth unemployment rate at **56%**, thousands of people are struggling to find work, feed themselves and their families, and find peace in their lives. Due to these issues, many communities have also faced an increase of violence and crime, including domestic violence, which only has a greater negative impact on their lives. This was echoed in a survey we conducted with our partner, BNP Paribas, which found that societal violence has a long-lasting and far-reaching effect on communities and business in South Africa, especially for women.

These are all matters at the core of WPDI's mission and mandate. Moving forward, it will take collective action to promote peace and sustainable development in South Africa in general and Cape Flats in particular. This report details some of our key achievements in 2020, which will expectedly form a basis for our actions in the months and years to come.

# KEY FACTS & FIGURES



**42** youths graduated from one year of intensive training with WPDl to become fully-fledged youth peacemakers.



**8** youth-led businesses won WPDl's inaugural Business Plan Competition and will be supported in the coming year.



**570** students and **100** educators from **4** primary and secondary schools have been trained in Conflict Resolution Education.



WPDl youth peacemakers created and distributed **5,000** reusable cloth masks in their communities.



**200** community leaders from Cape Flats have been fully trained in Peaecbuilding and Conflict Mediation.



**8** Community Dialogues were conducted in townships throughout Cape Flats to discuss conflict-related issues that are deeply affecting communities there, including gender-based violence.



**410** community members completed WPDl's certified courses in Conflict Resolution Education, Information & Communications Technology, or Business & Entrepreneurship.



# A COMMENCEMENT IS ONLY BUT A BEGINNING

After a year of training, WPDJ proudly graduated its first generation of youth peacemakers in Cape Flats



Following the Government of South Africa's national lockdown order, WPDJ worked closely with its partners on the ground and the authorities to adjust training plans for our cohort of **42** youth peacemakers. Although we had to close our Community Learning Center in Athlone, we shifted their training online so that we could ensure they remained ready to take their final exams in August 2020.

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*My training has helped me feel more ready to mediate conflicts in my community soon. This year has definitely helped me form a new perspective.*

*– Gcobani, a WPDJ youth peacemaker*

In October, we also moved to enrich their training with special sessions on trauma and conflict mediation. At a time when their country and communities are faced with the expectedly long-term impact of COVID-19 and its consequences on all aspects of life, these trainings were designed to strengthen the skills and knowledge that these aspiring community leaders acquired with us over the past year by increasing their capacity to cope with the conflicts and



traumas that they will have to face as they work in their communities. Importantly, these sessions were therefore designed both to assuage their personal traumas and conflicts in these troubled times and, in turn, to help them help others address their traumas and conflicts.

Thanks to the support of our partners and the hard work of our youths, the entire cohort successfully completed their final exams in August and graduated in December. The graduation ceremony was organized in close collaboration with our partners, BNP Paribas and the RCS Group, and included the participation of international and local dignitaries including the Ambassador of France to South Africa, Mr. Aurélien Lechevallier, the US General Consul for Cape Town, Mr. Will Stevens, and Ward Councilor Joan Woodman. Speaking virtually at the event, WPD I CEO and Founder Forest Whitaker told the youths that ***"I am proud because you completed a demanding training amid another crisis, a major global crisis that has brought the whole world to a halt, but did not stop you from striving to learn and grow."*** Antoine Sire, Head of Company Engagement at BNP Paribas, echoed a similar sentiment, telling the new class of youth peacemakers that ***"I am impressed by your resilience and achievements to promote peace in Cape Town, which is key to a sustainable future."***

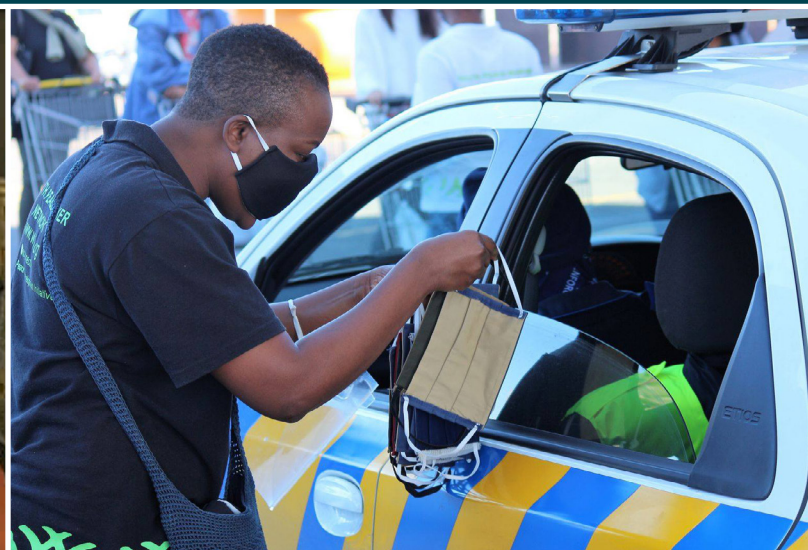
With their new skills in areas including Conflict Resolution Education, Information & Communications Technology, Business & Entrepreneurship, Leadership, and others, they are well-prepared to return to their communities early next year. When they do so, they will move into the next phase of their work by recruiting other young people and training them to become advocates for peace and change in their communities.

***"From first being accepted into the program to graduating from it, the skills we have learned are already proving valuable. Now, our mission is to continue the work, which is especially important now, given the widespread challenges facing our communities."***

***– Kayla, a WPD I youth peacemaker***



# MOBILIZING OUR YOUTH PEACEMAKERS TO HELP FIGHT COVID-19



In early March, the World Health Organization (WHO) designated COVID-19 as a global pandemic. On March 23, the Government of South Africa announced a nation-wide lockdown, which ultimately was kept in place until April 30 in addition to other restrictions. Despite the existence of stringent precautions and the implementation of measures designed to curb the spread of COVID-19, South Africa has been significantly impacted by the spread of the virus. To date, the country has more than **815,000** cases and over **22,000** deaths.

Many of our youth peacemakers – despite the fact that they had not yet graduated from their training with us – wanted to help their communities fight the virus. Four of the youths, led by Kayla, who has an interior decoration business, applied for an Essential Business Permit with the Government of Western Cape. When the permit was granted, the youths manufactured **5,000** reusable cloth masks, which they distributed at the four schools WPDl has partnered with to teach students and educators Conflict Resolution Education as well as in their respective communities.

In addition to creating and distributing facemasks, WPDl staff and youth peacemakers also worked in their communities to disseminate information to curb the spread of COVID-19. Working to dispel rumors and misinformation, many handed out WPDl-created factsheets about COVID-19, which used World Health Organization-verified information. Others contributed by handing out hygienic materials or mediated conflicts in their communities. One youth, Gcobani, mediated a conflict within a neighboring family for which the lockdown had apparently heightened dormant tensions. As it was public knowledge in the community that Gcobani was enrolled in a conflict resolution program, the family asked him to intervene. He successfully applied the methods he had learned with us to do so and has continued to follow up on the outcome of the process – in line with what he learned with us.

Gcobani's story – as well as those of Kayla and the other youths – is rich with lessons showing that it matters to be trusted by the community, that peace starts with everyday decisions to do good, and that even in the midst of a crisis, we must never cease to work towards peace.

# BACK TO LEARNING: CONTINUING EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES AT OUR COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER IN ATHLONE



When WPDI closed our Community Learning Center in Athlone at the end of March, we had to halt public events and vocational trainings for community members; in many instances, trainings that had only begun a few weeks beforehand.

**In 2020, 410 members of the public completed WPDI vocational training courses at our Community Learning Center in Athlone.**

With the reopening of our Community Learning Center on June 1, we were able to once again welcome trainees. In-person trainings began again on June 15 for our vocational courses in Information & Communications Technology and Business & Entrepreneurship. When welcoming new trainees, WPDI staff were sure to implement strict measures to protect our staff and beneficiaries against COVID-19 like mandating temperature checks, observing physical distancing, wearing facemasks, and using ample amounts of sanitizer. Posters informing visitors about these measures as well as about COVID-19 more generally are also observable throughout the Community Learning Center.





In our increasingly interconnected world, Information & Communications Technology skills have become a basic necessity for everyone. However, in many communities, opportunities to master those skills are lacking. Our certified training courses in Information & Communications Technology – which we offer at the Community Learning Center in Athlone – specifically aim to help community members gain new skills to help them succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century job market.

### **92 community members graduated from WPDI's Information & Communications Technology courses in 2020.**

As we recognize the importance of our Information & Communications Technology trainings with regards to helping trainees gain new vocational skills, WPDI expanded our training room at the Community Learning Center. The renovation also allowed us to redesign the room to allow for social distancing and the insertion of protective screens between each trainee.

In 2020, we were able to train **92** people in our basic and intermediate level courses. In the coming year, we plan to offer more Information & Communications Technology courses, including specialized ones for children.

“

***WPDI's ICT course helped me learn how to do a job search online and even create my own CV. I know how to do budgets, invoices, and use Google Docs, Google Sheets, and Google Slides. Thanks to the experience and skills I gained during the course, I was able to get a job! I look forward to taking the advanced course.***

***– Vernon, a Information & Communications Technology course trainee***



Providing the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully manage business operations is one of the most empowering experiences a person can acquire. WPD's Business & Entrepreneurship course – conducted at our Athlone Community Learning Center as well as directly in townships so as to reach as many people as possible – is among our most popular. Successfully completing the course is also a pre-requisite for entering into our Business Plan Competitions, which we conduct in partnership with the Government of Western Cape.

In addition to the in-classroom trainings at our center, we also complimented the curriculum by offering business field trips so that trainees could meet with entrepreneurs and receive first-hand experience.

**In 2020, 318 community members completed our Business & Entrepreneurship course.**



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



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

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

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

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



# LEARNERS AND PARTNERS

## Local Community Leaders Take our Conflict Resolution Training, Pledging to Work with WPDl to Help Make Peace Happen in the Flats

Training community leaders contributes to successful peacebuilding, as their buy-in of our work helps promote values, attitudes, and behaviors conducive to fostering peace at the community level. In addition, if community leaders have the tools to address difficult or even violent conflicts in their immediate areas, they can help deescalate situations and create environments within which peace and reconciliation are promoted.

WPDl commenced holding special standalone trainings in Conflict Resolution Education for **200** community leaders from the townships of Langa, Nyanga, Hanover Park, and Gugulethu after South Africa's national lockdown ended. Each township was specifically chosen due to its preexisting problems with conflict and violence: Nyanga Township, for example, is the most violent township in Cape Flats and has one of South Africa's highest crime rates.

Each training lasted three weeks and observed strict COVID-19 safety protocols. Trainees learned about human rights, conflict mediation, communication, and leadership, among other topics.

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*The day I began this training is the day that I felt reborn. I now fully understand more than ever that without peace, there can never be positive development. Our community has a deep desire for peace, and now I have the tools to help restore peace and calm to our streets.*

*– Virginia, a community leader from Nyanga Township*

# PROMOTING PEACE AND RECONCILIATION THROUGH COMMUNITY DIALOGUES



Community Dialogues play a key role in setting foundations of peace and reconciliation in areas that have been often impacted by the long-term consequences of conflict and chronic violence. By doing so in an open and transparent way, these dialogues help reinforce local stakeholders and their involvement in our activities, creating a ripple effect on the ground in local communities.

**In 2020, WPD staff and youth peacemakers held eight Community Dialogues, attended by 565 people.**

In 2020, WPD staff and youth peacemakers conducted eight Community Dialogues in some of the most vulnerable townships in Cape Flats, including Mitchell's Plain, Hanover Park, Lavender Hill, Bonteheuwel, and Harare. Attended by **565** people, the events focused on prevalent local issues, such as the rise in gender-based violence that has stricken South Africa in recent months. Beyond helping communities to address such key issues, the Dialogues have had a very positive impact in demonstrating the relevance of having a youth-force in the community. While our peacemakers had not completed their training at the time of these Dialogues, they had learned enough to start helping their communities. This is a highly promising start.

# FOSTERING A CULTURE OF PEACE IN SCHOOLS



WPDI's Conflict Resolution Education in Schools program operates under the understanding that all citizens can and should contribute to peacebuilding efforts in their own ways. No one is born with the capacity to mediate conflicts, but conflict resolution is a skill that anyone can learn, irrespective of their age or social status. Therefore, teaching Conflict Resolution Education to students in primary and secondary schools as well as their teachers is integral to our work. By disseminating those skills and values, we hope to create a grassroots movement that can foster peace around the world.

**570** students were trained in Conflict Resolution Education  
at **4** primary and secondary schools in Cape Flats.

Under the Conflict Resolution Education in Schools program, WPDI has partnered with Cypress Primary School, Thembani Primary School, Cedar High School, and Pandulwazi Secondary School in Cape Flats. Our staff conduct trainings at each school on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for **570** students in total. While in-person trainings were temporarily halted during South Africa's national lockdown, throughout the course of the year, the students learned about topics including types and stages of conflict, how to approach conflict, human rights, and understanding the role of emotions in conflict situations, among others. They completed their training and graduated from the program in December.





In addition to training **570** students in Conflict Resolution Education, we also offered specialized trainings for **100** educators at Thembani Primary School and Pandulwazi Secondary School. These trainings sought to empower the teachers with skills to help them manage conflicts in schools as well as integrate peace education principles into their regular teaching. During each of the two-week trainings, educators learned new strategies regarding how to better manage conflict, become role-models of nonviolence, manage their emotions, and develop 'peace zones' in their respective schools.

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*After the training, I am now better able to handle conflict situations that may arise in my classroom. Thank you for teaching me and the other teachers skills that we can use to create peace.*

*– Mr. Vukuza, a teacher at Pandulwazi Secondary School*

# AT ITS FIRST BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION IN SOUTH AFRICA, WPDI SELECTS EIGHT PROMISING PROJECTS TO BE LAUNCHED IN 2021



Business Plan Competitions are a core component of WPDI's Business Bootcamp initiative, which aims to train local youths in the areas in which we operate about business and entrepreneurship. 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.

WPDI's inaugural Business Plan Competition in Cape Flats was open to qualifying trainees who had successfully completed the basic and intermediate levels of the Business & Entrepreneurship training courses that are offered at the Community Learning Center in Athlone. With **73** of the **257** graduated trainees participating, it was well-attended. After the youths designed and submitted their business proposals, they worked with a review panel comprised of WPDI staff and local business leaders to help attendees hone their plans. After the proposals were resubmitted for final review, the panel deliberated for several weeks, ultimately selecting eight business plans that will receive support from WPDI and its partners.





With the competition now concluded, WPDJ and its partners will support:

- Bigger is Better (located in Portland), a clothing company focusing on producing active wear for plus-sized women;
- Sushi Fundi (located in Parow), a specialized sushi restaurant;
- Eastland Cabinets (located in Lavender Hill), a custom-made furniture company;
- Spice Gallery (located in Morgan Village), a high-quality spice producer;
- Jackson Nursery (located in Colorado Park), a nursery that specializes in producing indigenous herbs;
- Alabamza Catering (located in Athlone), a catering company that is focusing on producing healthy, nutritious food;
- Seconds for Good (located in Lavender Hill), a clothing recycling business; and
- Mitchells Plain Hair & Beauty Spa (located in Westridge), a professional salon dedicated to providing top-rate service.

We look forward to supporting all of the new businesses as their teams start to get to work. This support will include financial grants and backstopping support – both invaluable to fledgling businesses.

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***I had set my sights on winning the Business Plan Competition since the day I heard about it during my training. I decided to put everything into my proposal and use what I learned to improve it. After I heard that I won, I truly learned that hard work does indeed pay off!***

***– Rashieda, a former WPDJ trainee and single mother***



# CONCLUSION



Before the COVID-19 pandemic reached South Africa, WPDJ was well on its way towards achieving – and even exceeding – its planned goals in the country in 2020. However, we had to adapt to the new status quo. After we closed our Community Learning Center at the end of March due to the Government of South Africa instituting a national lockdown, we temporarily suspended public activities and our vocational trainings for community members while also instituting a distance learning policy for our cohort of **42** youth peacemakers.

Thanks to the support of BNP Paribas and the RCS Group, we were able to overcome early difficulties and remain on-track to achieve our highest priority – to complete the training of the youth peacemakers. Once we were able to re-open our Community Learning Center and offer trainings again to the public in June, we began offering our vocational trainings to hundreds of community members as well as conduct our inaugural Business Plan Competition.

While COVID-19 has presented many challenges, it has also displayed the potential of our work as well. In recent months, many of our future youth peacemakers and trainees rose to the challenges they faced, by putting what they learned with us into practice by mediating conflicts in their communities, by distributing WHO-verified information about the virus to inform others about measures they could take to protect themselves, or by creating and distributing hygienic materials like facemasks for the most vulnerable. With their versatility and dedication, despite the crisis at hand, we remain optimistic that possibility of peace and a larger positive transformation in Cape Flats remains possible.

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



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