



WHITAKER PEACE & DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Newsletter Summer 2023



03

Forest Whitaker Visits WPD
Programs in Uganda, South
Sudan, and France



05

'For the Sake of Peace'
Screens at UNESCO
Campus Day Event



06

WPD Peacemakers Runs
Peace Activities in South Africa



08

WPD signs
New Partnerships



09

Adelaide Moore wins
Business Bootcamp Competition



Foreword

Caroline DESCOMBRIS

Executive Director of WPDI

2023 is so far an auspicious time for WPDI. We have continued to work hard at ensuring that the communities where we operate can benefit from the full extent of our programs.

These efforts have been rewarded by the positive feedback that we have received from diverse stakeholders. These include from program participants telling us that they spread a positive message about us to local officials remarking on the transformations that their communities have experienced thanks to their collaboration with us.

Working on lasting peace and sustainable development cannot be measured solely through numbers and statistics: because these endeavors are first and foremost about the peoples and the communities at the grassroots, it is key, strategic, even, to listen to them carefully - for their feedback is a compass.

In this light, direct exchanges with beneficiaries and stakeholders is critical. Nothing is clearer for our CEO, Forest Whitaker, for whom reports must be complemented with direct conversations, eye to eye. I know how much of a disappointment it has been for him to be unable to travel extensively because of the COVID-19 constraints. But this predicament is now over and he was finally able to carry out a fully-fledged series of missions and field visits across Europe and Africa, in South Sudan and Uganda.

As you will read in this newsletter, this has been an opportunity to touch base with our teams and Youth Peacemakers on the ground, to strengthen our partnerships and to increase our visibility. One of the most striking outcomes of the visit, though, was probably found among the staff and the beneficiaries, whose interactions with our founder had a boosting effect on their motivation.

This is no small result. Working and living in places affected by conflict, violence, poverty and exclusion will easily take a toll on people, making motivation a priceless resource.

In this, assuredly, the year so far has been auspicious.



WPDl CEO and Founder Forest Whitaker Visits WPDl Programs in Uganda, South Sudan, and France

For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, WPDl founder and CEO, Forest Whitaker, visited WPDl missions in Uganda and South Sudan, as well as traveling to France to participate in the inauguration of our very first Community Learning Center in Aubervilliers.

FRANCE

WPDl was delighted to expand our global network back in May with the official opening of our CLC in Aubervilliers, a town in the Seine-Saint-Denis department, just north of Paris, France. Seine-Saint-Denis is the poorest area of metropolitan France, according to Insee, the country's office of national statistics. As part of our strategy to deploy programs on the ground at the closest of our beneficiaries, we set up this center to provide free access to courses for youths, women and other vulnerable groups, focusing on ICT, Entrepreneurship and Conflict Resolution. At the launch, Forest Whitaker was joined by Karine Franclet, the mayor of Aubervilliers, Olivier Klein, Minister Delegate of Cities and Housing, Stéphane Troussel, President of the Seine-Saint-Denis department, as well as Antoine Sire, Isabelle Giordano and Vanessa Bouquillion of BNP Paribas, our main partner for the program. *"It is with great pleasure that I welcome everyone of you to the WPDl Community Learning Center of Aubervilliers - a place for learning and a place for gathering in a spirit of peace and fraternity,"* said Forest Whitaker.

UGANDA

For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, Forest Whitaker joined a WPDl mission to Uganda to visit programs

and interact directly with beneficiaries, stakeholders and WPDl staff, and to launch our Peace Through Sports program. Forest was joined by representatives of some of our important partners, including Laura Chow, Head of Charities at the People's Postcode Lottery, Teresa Viegles, Deputy Secretary General of the Swedish Postcode Foundation, and George Land, Senior Vice President of NBA Africa. Forest visited the Kiyandongo Refugee Settlement, the Hope North primary school where he first met a group of former child soldiers back in 2006, and WPDl programs in the Acholi Sub-Region and the Karamoja Sub-Region.

SOUTH SUDAN

Following on from his week-long visit to WPDl centers around Uganda, Forest Whitaker led a WPDl mission to South Sudan to visit programs and exchange directly with beneficiaries, stakeholders and WPDl staff in Juba. Accompanied by Executive Director Caroline Descombris and Chief of Staff Valentine Goret, Forest was warmly welcomed by the local communities who have hosted and benefited from a multitude of WPDl programs since we began operating in the country in 2012.



1. Forest Whitaker & Muhammad Asar UI Haq from IOM in Juba, South Sudan

5. Traditional dancers in Juba, South Sudan

2, 3. Opening of a new Community Learning Center in Aubervilliers, France

6. Forest Whitaker with Teresa Viegles (Swedish Postcode Lottery), Laura Chow (People's Postcode Lottery [UK]), George Land (NBA Africa), and Evelyn Laruni (WPDI Uganda) in Gulu, Uganda

4. Graduation ceremony for teachers in Gulu, Uganda



UNESCO Campus Day: Forest Whitaker Joins 450 Students for Special Screening of 'For the Sake of Peace'

Back in May, WPDJ was honored to be the focus of the UNESCO Campus Initiative, which dedicated its 2023 edition to 'For the Sake of Peace', a documentary co-produced by WPDJ, Significant Productions and R2 Production, that focuses on two WPDJ Youth Peacemakers and their inspiring efforts to successfully create conditions for peace in South Sudan. Forest Whitaker traveled to Paris to participate in the event.

450 students from the Paris region were joined by Forest Whitaker, WPDJ Executive Director Caroline Descombris, and one of the film's directors, Thomas Sametin, for a special Q&A following the screening. Students were given the opportunity to find out more about Forest Whitaker's decade-long journey to help marginalized communities find a path to peace, and ask questions about the filming itself.

The documentary film, presented at the Cannes Film Festival last year, focuses on the resilience and actions of Nandège and Gatjang, who each have a firm commitment to create peace in the volatile context of the world's youngest country which has been ravaged by violence since its inception in 2011, with over 350,000 people killed since then.

The film shows that in spite of this, through this darkness and repeated conflict, hope shines through

thanks to the determination of young women and men who refuse to give up on peace. Gatjang, a referee in a camp for displaced people in Juba, uses sport to pass on a culture of peace to children and young people from tribes opposed by stubborn hostility. Nandège, a young mother, manages to emerge against all odds as a talented mediator in the settlement of a deadly conflict that has pitted communities in the Kidepo Valley against each other for generations. Through their stories, we become aware of the paths available to our humanity and their resonance across horizons and borders.

WPDJ would like to thank UNESCO for providing a platform for us to spread our message of peace and directly impact the peacemakers of tomorrow.



WPDI Youth Peacemakers Run Series of **Peace** **Activities in South Africa**

WPDI has been running targeted peacebuilding initiatives in the Cape Flats area of South Africa since 2019. Engagement, communication and proactivity are key if these young people are to reduce their risk of exposure to substance abuse, violent behaviors and gangsterism. Teaching them about the dangers of violence and showing them another way is at the heart of WPDI's approach.



Peace Through Art

For example, at the beginning of July, WPDI Youth Peacemaker, Joseph, organized a "Peace Through Art" activity for children in the Cape Flats. He used the activity to explain to the children the importance of peace and sharing personal stories and examples to help them understand the dangers of violence at a young age, encouraging them to incorporate the peaceful practices into their daily lives and to avoid imitating violent behavior. The children engaged in various activities such as face painting, drawing, coloring and playing football.



Peace Through Sports

These peace activities also place real focus on female empowerment, and the encouragement of young women and girls to get involved in the development of their local communities. Sports have proven to be a great way to reach disenfranchised youths. WPDI therefore founded a special football club for local girls, and a netball club, in order to give them an outlet to channel their personal trauma into something positive. They share a common love for sports, and have found somewhere where they feel able to express themselves freely.

Peace Through Feeding the Needy

Building peace also means providing basic services in underdeveloped communities. That is why one WPDI Youth Peacemaker decided to organize a "Peace Through Feeding the Needy" activity. The purpose of the activity was to contribute and assist with essential necessities to one of the Gugulethu feeding scheme programs in his community. The event was very positively received in the community, as many local homes are living below the breadline. The feeding program helped a number of children that are left unsupervised during school holidays, without food for days while their parents are trying to make ends meet.



Peace Through Music

Another of our Youth Peacemakers, Yaseen, started a music program in the Lavender Hill community in order to provide a healthy alternative activity for youths to help them stay occupied in a positive way after school. It has proved a powerful way to keep them occupied and has the potential to help develop local role models who can showcase their talents and inspire others to choose a positive path.



SONY MUSIC



LUOL
DENG
FOUNDATION

WPDI Signs New Partnerships with Sony Music Group, the People's Postcode Lottery, and the Luol Deng Foundation

At WPDI, our global strategy to foster peace in communities affected by violence would not be possible without our network of partners and sponsors, all of whom share our commitment to the sustainable development of peace around the world. Every year, we are honored to embark on new collaborations with different organizations who are willing to support our peacebuilding, livelihoods, health and wellbeing, and sports programs.

SONY MUSIC GROUP

WPDI is proud to roll out its global programs across Mexico and France with support from Sony Music Group, through the company's Global Social Justice Fund. In the framework of our Business Bootcamp initiative, WPDI designed our Women Livelihood Program in order to provide opportunities for women from marginalized communities to access training courses in Business and Entrepreneurship, ICT and Conflict Resolution Education to help them realize their potential as entrepreneurs, income generators and community leaders. In 2023, thanks to Sony Music Group's support, we are delighted to expand this initiative in two of the countries where we operate: Mexico and France.

PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY

After years collaborating with the Swedish Postcode Lottery Foundation in Africa and Mexico, WPDI has entered a new partnership with their fellow company, the People's Postcode Lottery of the United Kingdom. The two lotteries operate on the same system, whereby the value of 33% of the tickets sold is allocated to local, national and international humanitarian organizations working towards humanitarian goals. To announce the partnership, the People's Postcode Lottery invited our CEO and founder, Forest Whitaker, to Edinburgh to participate in their yearly Charity Gala held on May 15th.

LUOL DENG FOUNDATION

After Forest Whitaker and former NBA player Luol Deng met in Juba, South Sudan last May, WPDI and Luol Deng Foundation (LDF) signed a new partnership in August 2023. The collaboration promises to jointly support the Sports Diplomacy and Peace project which is funded by the Canadian Embassy in Juba. The program aims to create a space for young people to improve not only their sporting skills but also emotional intelligence, life skills and social cohesion. Under this project, WPDI's Youth Peacemakers will provide training in different areas to 50 young basketballers aged 14 – 24 in the next six months. The 3-hour session for the LDF's participants will focus on understanding the concept of peace, conflict resolution, negotiation, mediation, emotional intelligence, trauma healing, identity, gender, gender-based violence, human rights and digital and physical safety and security among other topics.





Adelaide Moore Becomes New Business Owner after Winning WPDI's Business Bootcamp Competition

Adelaide is an inspirational woman from the Cape Flats area, Cape Town, South Africa. Winner of the Women Livelihood Program in 2022, Adelaide was able to establish her dress-hiring business Royal House Creations to provide affordable costumes for youth dancers in her community.

The Cape Flats area, located in Cape Town, South Africa, is no stranger to extreme poverty. While Cape Town ranks as the second-wealthiest city on the continent of Africa, decades of Apartheid rule have left scars of marginalization and partitioning that still run deep, leaving one part of the city affluent while the other remains economically desolate. These issues of economic exclusion, moreover, are exacerbated for women, who suffer from generally higher rates of unemployment, primarily due to limited education and cultural values within the community. And the women who are formally employed are often subject to poor working conditions, lowered salaries, and a lack of leadership opportunities. The Cape Flats are one of the most difficult areas for women to thrive, despite women's potential to markedly improve the quality of life in their communities.

In order to uplift women in the Cape Flats, WPDI, with support from the L'Oréal Fund for Women, seeks to empower through the Women Livelihood Program, which provides entrepreneurial training to create sustainable sources of income. WPDI and L'Oréal hope to spark a positive culture of women-led businesses that contribute

to the community and inspire other young girls to follow suit. Women who have passed the intermediate level of the Business and Entrepreneurship course are eligible to enter the Business Bootcamp Competition, in which business plans are judged by a qualified panel. The final prize is a nonrefundable grant that new-business owners can use to initiate their business, and additional mentoring and support from WPDI.

One of last year's winners of the Business Bootcamp Competition, Adelaide, was able to blend her appreciation for dance and her knowledge of clothing garments to develop her business, Royal House Creations, a dress-hiring company that provides costumes for children and youth dance recitals. And while Adelaide clearly emerged victorious, upon hearing about the business course, she was initially hesitant to join as an older student because she feared she would not master the skills within the timeframe. Prior to participating in the Business and Entrepreneurship course at WPDI, Adelaide worked as a craftswoman and children's dance instructor in her community but soon realized that many of her students could not afford to pay for the expensive costumes

required for performances. To address this, Adelaide sought to create a hiring company that focused on affordability for families living in her area, but she needed to learn the appropriate business skills before she could do so.

While she was aware of the end goal, crafting a financial plan that both decreased the overall price of the garments and still made a profit would prove to be challenging. Adelaide herself stated that *"one of [her] biggest challenges during Business Bootcamp was completing the calculations"* and that *"[she] actually had a fear that*

[she] would fail the course specifically because of math." As one of the oldest students taking the course, Adelaide was particularly conscious of her mathematical struggles and was concerned that she would not be able to keep up with the pace of the other students.

But in fact, those very students were the ones that supported Adelaide by going over some of the concepts with her. *"I definitely found the process difficult at times, as the courses actually required me to do homework,"* she said. With tutoring support from her community, she was able to pass the course.



Furthermore, during the Business Bootcamp Competition, she was able to make use of her newfound mathematical skills to come up with a payment plan to make garments cheaper, without decreasing the quality. By charging an extra ten rand per week, Adelaide can hire dresses for 50 rand, as opposed to the usual 200 that families had been paying at the end of the lessons. Paying in increments allows parents to afford performance garments for their children without compromising the family's essential needs. One of Adelaide's fondest memories of the competition was the sense of pride she felt when presenting her final project to her classmates, the women who supported her along the way.

As a new business owner, Adelaide feels overwhelmed with all her new responsibilities, but she is intent on savoring every moment of her experience. She feels honored to represent her community in the Cape Flats and her community at WPDI, without whom Royal House

Creations may not exist. In the future, Adelaide hopes to increase the variety of her dress hiring to include costume styles such as Latin dance. Her latest endeavor involves working with a dance production that will require 50-75 costumes. For Adelaide, Royal House Creations is more than a chance to better her financial situation; it's the opportunity to fulfill her childhood dream. *"My aunt was a seamstress, so I grew up in that environment. Even when I was little, I used to make and sew dolls. I feel like this dream was always in my heart."*

WPDI 2023 Semester 1 Achievements

49 
Community Dialogues held
6,339 participants
in dialogues

255
schools hosting
WPDI programs
22,748 
learners & teachers trained

 **1,654** CRE trainees
 **17,077**
Participants in
peacebuilding
activities at CLCs

1,905
Sexual & Reproductive
Health participants
1,220 
Trauma Healing
participants

214 
SMEs created in 2023

606
SMEs supported by WPDI in
total

15,356
Beneficiaries of all SMEs

4,734
trainees of our vocational
trainings

 **2,870**
jobs created

162 sports teams
managed by WPDI

3,246 regular
training participants 

26,390 participants
in competitions and events

29,636 total
participants in
sportive activities

**Click the link below
www.wpdi.org/donate
to support WPDl**

www.wpdi.org



WHITAKER PEACE & DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (WPDl)

17777 Center Court Drive N. Suite 600.

Cerritos, CA 90703

United States of America



**WHITAKER
PEACE & DEVELOPMENT
INITIATIVE**