



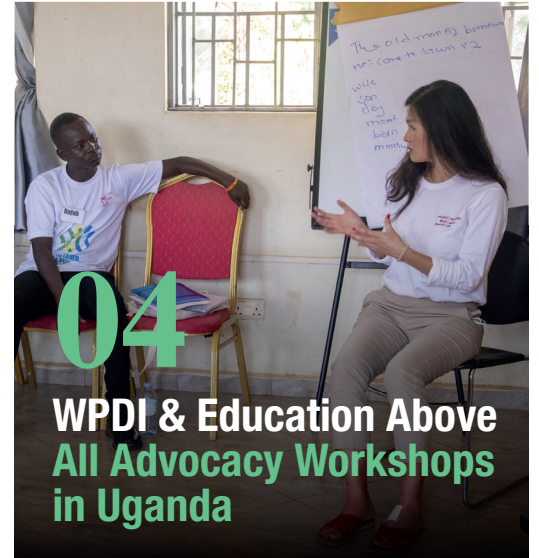
WHITAKER PEACE & DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

# Newsletter Summer 2022



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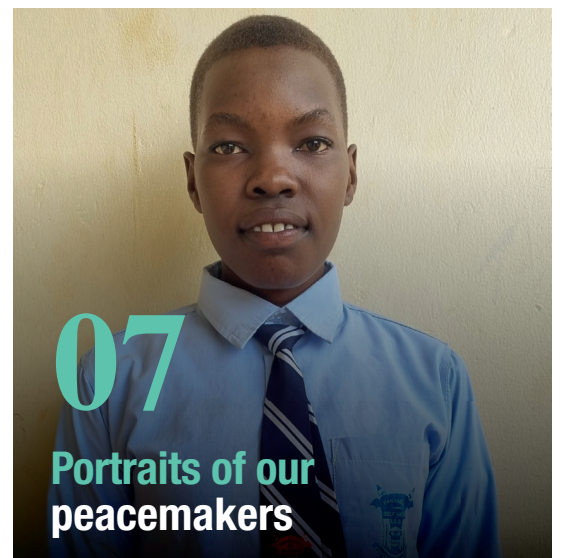
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# Foreword

**Caroline DESCOMBRIS**

*Executive Director of WPDJ*

It is with great pleasure that I present to you this latest newsletter for the summer of 2022. It has been an exciting period for everyone at WPDJ, not just because of what was achieved but also because of the perspectives that these achievements open for the coming years. The movie we presented in Cannes, “For the Sake of Peace”, is a perfect illustration of this, with Forest introducing the public at a high-level event to the work of youth peacemakers living in remote places plagued by conflict and fragility. These are places that the world tends to forget and overlook – and, yet, as we always find, such places always happen to be host to incredible individuals who are determined to make peace happen – sometimes at personal cost. From Torit, South Sudan, to the Cannes Festival in France, or from the UN, in New York, to Mitontic, in Chiapas, Mexico, the distances seem impossible – but they are not. Distances can be broken. This is an overarching goal of WPDJ, embodied in the very title of our flagship program, the Youth Peacemaker Network: we aim to establish networks for peace, gathering very different people behind this most vital objective. This is what we seek to achieve, for instance, when we bring skills to our young leaders. During the summer, for instance, we organized different workshops to strengthen our young leaders’ skills in conflict resolution, that help to reduce conflict – that is distance – between individuals and groups. Another example is the workshop on advocacy skills that we held in July, aimed to train our peacemakers to champion peace and human rights values before a wide array of audiences – villages or elected assemblies and officials. Disseminating skills in conflict resolution and advocacy skills, teaching our youth how to break distances, is clearly one of these achievements that is rich with perspectives.





## Forest Whitaker Receives the 2022 Honorary Palme d'Or and presents his film “For the Sake of Peace” at the Cannes Film Festival

At the end of May 2022, WPDJ CEO and Founder, Forest Whitaker, was the guest of honor at the Opening of the **75th Cannes Film Festival** in France. He was invited to deliver the opening speech of the ceremony and received the Honorary Palme d'Or from Pierre Lescure, the President of the Festival.

This prestigious award from one of the most prominent institutions in the world of cinema came in recognition of his exceptional career as artist and producer as well as his unwavering commitment to humanitarian issues and social justice. The award was conferred on Forest Whitaker to highlight how he has profoundly transformed the film industry through his work both on and off the screen.

During his remarks when being awarded the Honorary Palme d'Or, Forest Whitaker said: ***“As I returned to the Palais today, memories came flooding back to me from 34 years ago, when I was first invited to Cannes in support of the movie Bird. [...] The encouragement and support I received at Cannes assured me that I'd chosen the right path for myself, and truly opened doors for me to be viewed as an international artist.”***

Whitaker's commitment to humanitarian causes was also signaled at the Festival with the world premiere screening of **For the Sake of Peace**, a documentary film directed by Christophe Castagne and Thomas Sametin and produced by WPDJ, Significant Productions and R2 Production. The film tells us how two youths, a young

mother, Nandege, and a football coach at a camp for displaced persons, Gatjang, chose to fight for peace in their respective communities in two different places of South Sudan, a country ravaged by war.







# WPDI & Education Above All Advocacy Workshops in Uganda

Early July, WPDI and EAA jointly gathered **Youth Peacemakers** from WPDI programs in **South Sudan and Uganda** at our **Community Learning Center** of Gulu, Uganda, with the objective of training them on advocacy campaigning skills.

Over an intensive week of plenary and breakout groups, they familiarized themselves with tools for creating and delivering messages, notably on human rights and the right to education across a wide array of audiences in the respect of local customs and regulations. At the end of the week, they were invited to put their new skills to use directly in a school and a small village in the Gulu wider district.

Disseminating key messages of civic interest is an organic part of the WPDI mandate to promote **Sustainable Development Goals, Human Rights** and other internationally recognized principles, which often remain distant or foreign in remote communities. The objective of the project is to **raise awareness** within local communities about key values through **Community Dialogues**.

Furthermore, the initiative aims to **mobilize children and adolescents** from 264 primary and middle schools to advocate for key values through **local campaigns**. The project therefore has an immense potential to create massive long-term change by trusting children and youth in their capacity to foster **positive transformation** in their direct environments.

The workshop included an introduction to WPDI's Sustainable Developments Goals and how to use them as a global framework for local advocacy campaigns. Participants also learned how to identify and analyze problems faced by their communities and how to then

design strong messages to relevant audiences. The last two days were devoted to testing the Youth Peacemakers' newly gained skills by running real campaigns in concrete settings.

The second campaign took place in a village a few kilometers from Gulu. The Peacemakers advocated for girls' education, stressing that too many girls were induced to drop out of schools because their parents preferred to send boys to school and keep girls at home for domestic chores. The community was very responsive to the topic, including the leadership, all male, who recognized that there was a need for their community to change and make more space for women and girls.







# WPDI Runs Peace Education Refresher Training Program in Uganda and South Sudan

In the framework of its global Youth Peacemaker Network, WPDI organized a **capacity building workshop** for 94 youth Peacemakers from the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, the Karamoja and Acholi Sub-Regions in Uganda, and 75 Youth Peacemakers from the three states of the Equatoria region of South Sudan.

High-level representatives from national and state ministries or commissions also attended the workshop. The objective was to introduce them to our re-designed and re-edited **Youth Peacemaker Peace Education Handbook**, which has been designed to help reinforce and strengthen the young peacemakers' knowledge, understanding and skills in peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Education in order to help them deliver effective and efficient training sessions themselves in primary and secondary schools.

The workshop marked an important step towards our objective of expanding our ability to disseminate **skills for peace** to more and more people. In 2021, our global network of Youth Peacemakers trained 18,000 students in Africa, Mexico and the United States, partnering with 109 schools. We have no doubt that our improved toolkit will allow us to reach even more people in the years to come.

The sessions were conducted by Juliette Hanrot, an expert in Conflict Resolution and Peace Education, and co-facilitated by our trainer Wesley. For the Youth Peacemakers, it was an opportunity to reinforce their confidence in the subject and become more empowered to continue to bring this knowledge to others in their res-

pective communities. The youth participants were delighted at being able to make progress and gain a deeper understanding on teaching others, as highlighted by Irene: *"The peace education handbook training has widened my knowledge and understanding on how to conduct and manage my training sessions in school. I appreciate WPDI & EAA for the support."*







## WPDI Partners with Anand Chulani and Runs Online Leadership and Trauma Healing Workshop for 154 Youth Peacemakers

WPDI was delighted to team up with Anand Chulani, Trusted Leadership Advisor, International Award Winning Speaker, and Expert in Mental and Emotional Strength for a unique training program for our Youth Peacemaker Network in Uganda and South Sudan back in July. The online program focused on Leadership and Trauma healing for 94 Youth Peacemakers in Uganda and 60 in South Sudan.

Anand Chulani led the interactive **leadership** and **trauma healing** sessions designed to engage the **Youth Peacemakers** via Zoom. During these sessions, he provided them with tools to be **leaders** for themselves, to influence their thoughts, actions and behavior and be **peacebuilders in their communities**. These sessions enabled them to understand why people come into conflict and gave them tools to influence people's way of thinking and actions in order to foster communal peace.

Using tools from his Absolute Champion Methodology, including visualizations, one-on-one coaching, meditations and therapeutic interventions, Anand Chulani was also able to help participants free themselves of the suffering of their past, such as losing family members when they were children, which helps them forgive themselves for any pain they may have caused when they were younger and forgiving family members and people who have directly hurt or even killed members of their family.

*«I am deeply honored to partner with the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative," said Anand Chulani. "Forest Whitaker's vision for a more peaceful planet is inspiring and the work the NGO is doing is truly extraordinary. Their*

*Youth Peacemakers are some of the most resilient people I've ever met and they are having a real and measurable impact in peace-building in Uganda and South Sudan. It's a privilege to be able to serve them so they can heal, be at peace with themselves, so they can be their own champions and bring that leadership to their communities and to the world.»*

Forest Whitaker has recognized the power of Anand's unique approach to personal trauma healing, declaring that "Anand's philosophy is one of the most innovative approaches to personal transformation that I know of. He has rightly identified how leadership and resilience are deeply connected as capacities to elevate ourselves in the face of challenges. This is essential knowledge, especially for young people who are often searching for tools to cope with their transition into adulthood. Anand's training has provided our youths a unique opportunity to learn from their experiences and better prepare themselves to help others regain their resilience capacity."



# «Peacebuilding is not a dream or utopia»:

## A young peacebuilder striving for peace in Mexico

First published by Divya Gupta for GPPAC on 12 August 2022

Hailing from the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Fabiola experienced a life of double marginalization. Like many others, she faced the battle of growing up as a young woman in a conflict-affected area. Not knowing it was peace that she was seeking, she felt discontent with herself and her context - something needed to change.

### IN THE QUEST FOR PEACE

**Peacebuilding** was not in the cards until Fabiola realized that not only she, but her entire surrounding lacked peace. Being protective of her, Fabiola's family was not on board with her venture into peacebuilding. They did not fully comprehend the endeavors of being a young peacebuilder, especially in a rural region like Chiapas. In addition to convincing her family, Fabiola also had to prove her abilities to the outside world. It was challenging for her to be taken seriously as a local young peacebuilder, without being aligned with a foreign, international institution. Such power dynamics have also had a big impact on her as a young woman, as she shares: *"Many times in my job I have had to act more masculine in order to show that I am suitable for certain tasks, but at the same time I have been judged by doing so. Misogyny is very common, as well as "machismo" which is practiced by both men and women."*

Perhaps even the biggest challenge of all was **finding peace** in herself. Going through tough moments, it was difficult for her to maintain peace with herself as she felt judged by others. In these times it was easy to forget that everyone goes through different emotions and feels overwhelmed at times, as she explains: "During this period of my life I faced many stressful moments, times when I didn't know what to do, times when I fell apart, reaching a point of forgetting who I really am."

### FINDING PEACE TOGETHER

Fabiola's journey in identifying herself as a young peacebuilder was not easy. However, her life turned around when she found her calling with the support of women who encouraged her to strive for an alternative. From them, she learned that by acting from and with love we can all improve the world we inhabit.

*"Desde acciones con amor es posible mejorar el espacio que habito." - By acting with and from love, we can improve the world we live in.*

With new found motivation, Fabiola started to work on delivering peace, self-care and agro-ecology workshops to youth and women in the neighborhood, as well as in rural communities. She was able to grow a community network around her, built on the ideal of using crisis as an opportunity for transformation. Now, her true passion lies in studying the use of medicinal plants to cure

women related diseases - a way of repaying the debt of gratitude she owed to the women who encouraged her to strive for peace. She recalls :

*"Those women acted as a kind of nest for me, a refuge where I felt protected and sheltered. Even today when I'm with a group of women, they always take me in, they show me we can build peace in our community. They always shower me with plenty of love, protection and sorority."*

### MOVING PEACE FORWARD

Fabiola is determined to continue her work until the voices of young people are heard. Her message to **international stakeholders** is to be **sensitive**, to approach **youth** and learn about the **problems they face in their different contexts**. This is the only way to open **dialogue** and find solutions that meet the needs of young people in all their diversities. She emphasizes the importance of safe spaces like GPPAC member organization the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WPDI), as they enable young women and men to see themselves as agents of **positive change** in their own communities. In an ideal world, she would see a mechanism that promotes such organizations and projects to support more young people.

Now, Fabiola yearns for a **brighter future** for the young people in Mexico and across the globe. She believes making youth central to **peacebuilding** is of paramount importance considering the **escalating violence** in the world, and more specifically in Chiapas. She holds the torch for other young peacebuilders to be recognised as the **changemakers** and **peacebuilders** of today, tomorrow and the future. In the same vein, she encourages her peers: *"Young people have potential and energy. We are restless and we can redirect it to build our own future in our communities. For this to happen we need to be heard and trusted. If we make mistakes, it means we are in a learning process. Youth are the changemakers for tomorrow and with some upliftment from society, we can build long lasting peace not only in Mexico but in the entire world."*



# Refugee, Advocate for Girls' Education, Student Representative: A Portrait of Oyela Mary Immaculate from Uganda

Oyela Mary Immaculate, 18, is a student at Panyadoli Self Help Secondary School, form 6 Arts, Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement. She is the student's representative in the Uganda National Students Association (UNSA)



presentative for her peers – and she could not miss an opportunity to deliver a critical message to such an audience.

**On July 2, 2022, she attended the 32nd students' Council meeting that was held at the Uganda Christian University, Mukono and brought more than 130 students from 130 schools.** Key issues discussed during this matter included: student welfare, strengthening better students' participation in issues affecting them, strengthening case reporting and referral pathways.

Oyela Mary Immaculate was excited to have the privilege to contribute to the work of the organization and seized this unique opportunity to advocate for the achievement and protection of girl child education and their rights. *"I am excited to participate at this national student's council where my contribution to the amendment of the constitution will shape and **protect the future of girl child education in the country.** I am also delighted that my input in this association has given me the chance to **create awareness** and **sensitize** fellow students and parents on the value of **protecting girl child education** and training them on how to make reusable sanitary pads that has hugely contributed to the proper management of menstrual hygiene among the girls hence, reduced school dropout rate amongst the girl students"* remarked Mary Immaculate.

**UNSA is an umbrella organization for all students in post primary institutions in Uganda and Ugandan students studying abroad, guiding and supporting them in the promotion of their academic ambitions and the achievement of successful careers.**

With the UNSA membership made up of 7 million students from secondary schools, High schools, Tertiary & Vocational institutions and Universities, Oyela Mary Immaculate can be particularly proud to officiate a re-



# WPDI 10 years of achievements

**121**



**schools hosting our  
Peace Education  
program**

**71,700**

**pupils  
& students trained**



**200,000**

**direct participants  
in activities &  
training in our CLCs**

**265**

**businesses  
are currently supported**



**44%**

**of our beneficiaries  
are women**



**14**

**Community  
Learning Centers**

**28,000**

**participants  
in our community  
dialogues**

**2,193**

**community leaders  
trained in mediation  
& peacebuilding**



**1.4 million**

**people reached  
directly by WPDI  
activities & campaigns**

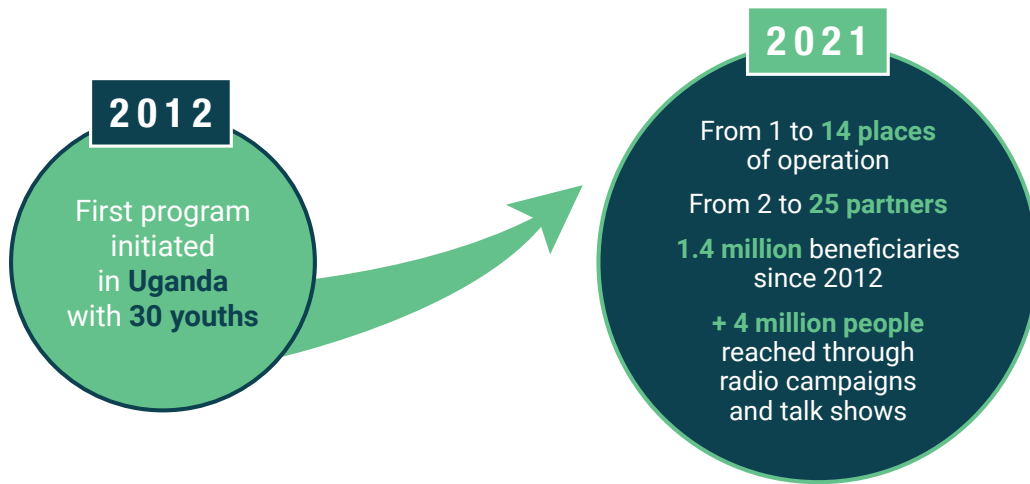


**3,975,000**


**light touched  
beneficiaries from  
radio talk shows**



# 10 years of implementation



## Our ambition for the next decade



**3 million**  
direct beneficiaries  
**+ 8 million** people reached through radio campaigns and talk shows



**1.3 million**  
children, youths and teachers reached through the Peace Education in school program in 3,260 primary & secondary schools



**260,000**  
people to participate in activities and vocational trainings in our **25** Community Learning Centers



**1 million**  
people reached through conflict mediation and advocacy campaigns



**12,000**  
Youth Peacemakers trained as mediators, entrepreneurs, trainers and community organizers



**3,140**  
businesses generating benefits for around 420,000 people

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