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PEACE & DEVELOPMENT
INITIATIVE

SHAPING PEACE TOGETHER

A TRIBUTE TO WPDI YOUTH PEACEMAKERS



A Message from Forest Whitaker

75 years ago, the United Nations were founded on the ashes of two successive world wars with one primary ambition - peace. The magnitude of these two conflicts was without precedent. Nearly all human beings had been engulfed in conflicts that spanned the whole planet. Worse, the invention and use of nuclear weapons in 1945 demonstrated that humanity could be the cause of its own annihilation. In a moment of rare lucidity, the victors of the Second World War vowed to declare peace to be the normal state of human affairs and war an anomaly. We still live by this truth.

In this sense, when celebrating peace, as we do every year on, we recognize that peace is the standard, not war, and that dialogue should always prevail. This remains our conviction today, even as the sound and fury of wars continues to rage in too many places. Failing at engineering peace is never a failure of peace, but a sign that alternative paths must be found and that new efforts must be made at cooperation as the United Nations recognized in identifying “shaping peace together” as the focus of International Peace Day 2020. Cooperation is the key. I created the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WPDI) because I believe that we have more need for peace and cooperation than ever. I created WPDI in particular because I believe that peace and cooperation should not be the preserve of the governments and the experts, because they are shared responsibilities of everyone “without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” Young people in particular have an immense role to play – not just because they are the future, but also because they are a source of energy and renewal that we must tap in the present. Today, though, 408 million youths live in conflict- and violence-affected places; they are often perceived as the victims or perpetrators of violence. I choose to see them differently: they can be a force for peace and positive transformation, if empowered to do so. Showcasing outstanding achievements by WPDI-supported youths in the areas of peace and sustainable development, this publication is a tribute to the capacity of young women and men to make peace happen right here, right now.

75 years after the foundation of the United Nations, humanity is experiencing, with COVID-19, a catastrophe with a magnitude that rivals in scope the two world wars. While the lethality

of the pandemic does not, luckily, compare with these two wars, no event has, since, entered the daily experience of so many people at the same time, keeping in mind that the world's population in 1945 was roughly 2.5 billion and that today there are 7.8 billion of us. Countries have reacted very differently and, alas, not in a coordinated fashion. Some were better prepared than others. Some reacted more aptly than others. Confinement measures have laid bare the inequalities that continue to hamper the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In my country, the United States, the virus has heightened the awareness of racial injustice and prompted nation-wide demonstrations and conversations. One could say that while the virus is biological in its nature, the pandemic is human in its spread, revealing our collective shortcomings.

In this sense, how we respond to COVID-19 has everything to do with our capacity for peace. Indeed, reaching out to others out of solidarity is just another name for peace. To this effect, WPDI has, since the outbreak of the pandemic, remained fully mobilized, staying true to its mission of working to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable communities to rebound in the face of crises and challenges. In the United States and Mexico, we have shifted the trainings we offer in topics including Conflict Resolution Education, Information & Communications Technology, and Business & Entrepreneurship online, allowing us to reach hundreds of additional trainees. Meanwhile, in South Sudan and Uganda, we mobilized 1,300 youth peacemakers to disseminate reliable information about the COVID-19 virus as well as hygienic supplies like masks, soap, and handwashing stations to more than 250,000 people. In South Africa, we have begun the final months of virtual training using tools like Google Classrooms for our cohort of aspiring youth peacemakers, who have in turn already begun working to assist their communities in their response to the pandemic. All in all, the COVID-19 crisis has reminded us that, whatever challenge we are faced with, there can be no sustainable future for humanity if we do not work at "shaping peace together".

Peace and Light,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Forest Whitaker', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

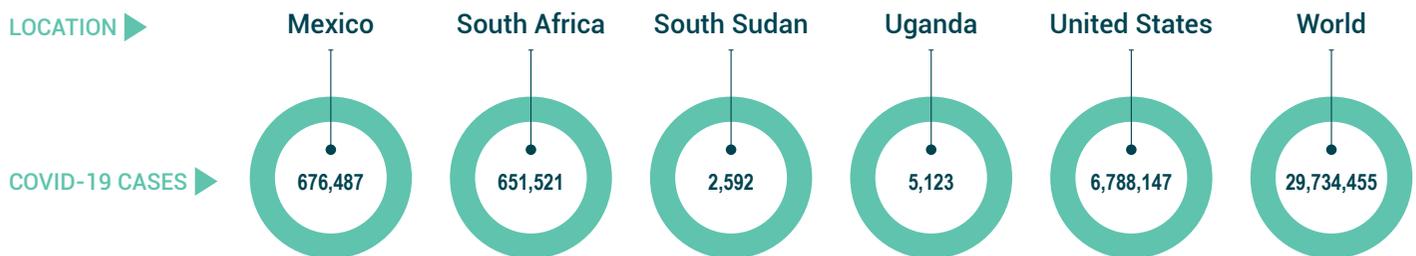
*Forest Whitaker
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UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation
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Shaping Peace Together by Helping Vulnerable Communities Curb the Spread of COVID-19



The Global Challenge of COVID-19 in a Snapshot

All the countries in which WPMI operates have suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic to various degrees, prompting different responses from our staff and youth peacemakers.



Data extracted mid-September on worldometers.info

The COVID-19 outbreak has exacerbated some of our most pressing challenges – including inequality, access to healthcare, and economic insecurity. The pandemic has shed light on the need for countries, communities, and people to work together in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity. Everyone has a stake and a role, starting with the respect of preventative measures at the personal level. However, for the many people living in remote places, notably in conflict-affected and post-conflict areas, access to information and equipment can be scarce or nonexistent, exposing them to the dual risk of falling prey to the virus or spreading it further. No one can be left behind as humanity tackles a pandemic. For WPMI, it remains urgent for us to take action, giving a new face to our efforts at fostering resilience in vulnerable communities.



Since March, more than 1,000 WPDI youth peacemakers have been mobilized in South Sudan and Uganda to educate people about COVID-19. They have participated in radio talk shows and disseminated more than 60,000 face masks and other hygienic supplies. To date, the campaign has reached more than 250,000 people in some of the most vulnerable areas of Uganda and South Sudan and showed how youths, when empowered, can have a remarkable impact and contribute to making their communities more resilient.



Meet Richard Komakech, a WPDI Youth Peacemaker Turned Health Worker to Address COVID in His Community

My name is Richard Komakech. I am 30 years old and live in Northern Uganda's Pader District, in the Acholi Sub-Region. I have been a WPDI youth peacemaker for two years. Before the coronavirus pandemic, I helped train hundreds of youths at local primary and secondary schools and members of the District Task Force in Conflict Resolution Education and participated in events like Community Dialogues to reconcile communities.

When the government started taking measures to prevent the spread of the virus, we realized that everything would have to be put on hold and that many people living in remote locations had no access to information about COVID-19. We had to do something. The first thing we needed was accurate data. For this, we could rely on WPDI. They collected data from reputable sources, like the UN, and created posters that we could put on walls or simply distribute to people, while respecting social distancing of course. With this good information at hand, I mobilized other youths to raise awareness about COVID-19 and reduce the number of myths that had spread in the community. We also distributed portable hand-washing stations, soap, and masks to over 200 households as well as in markets, Boda-Boda stages, and other public spaces. We have reached more than 500 people in our community. I have also participated in radio talk shows sponsored by WPDI and the Swedish Postcode Foundation so people could know how they can help stop the spread of the virus. On these shows, many youths and other listeners have called in to ask questions, and I could inform them about the virus and preventative measures they can take to protect themselves and their communities.

My training with WPDI has helped me become a leader and a resource for my community. In this moment, I want to encourage other youths to take the lead and work at making their villages and their neighborhoods more resilient and healthier.

Shaping Peace Together by Fostering Dialogue Within Local Communities



Tapping the Potential of the 408 million Youth Living in Conflict- and Violence-affected places

We live in a time where we have the largest youth generation in human history, with **1.8 billion** young people today alive between the ages of **15 to 29**.

Of this **1.8 billion**, 90 percent live in developing countries, and **one in four**, or approximately **408 million**, are living in settings directly affected by armed conflict or organized violence.

In **70 percent** of the countries affected by civil conflicts, more than half of the population is under 25.

Source: United Nations – Youth Peace and Security Report 2018

Peace cannot be achieved when there is no space for productive dialogue. This basic principle of diplomacy is true at all levels and in all places, no matter how remote they are or entrenched their conflicts may seem to be. Fostering Community Dialogues is therefore at the heart of WPDI's efforts to help build peace in vulnerable areas. These dialogues are mainly conducted by our youth peacemakers, who are insiders who have intimate knowledge of local situations and are already trusted by local populations. Over the years, these youths have successfully reconciled dozens of conflicts, many of them previously longstanding ones.



To date, more than **12,000** people have attended youth-led community dialogues in South Sudan, Mexico, South Africa, and Uganda.



The Power of a Peacemaker In South Sudan: Bringing the Didinga and Logiri to the Negotiation Table

In 2019, Magdalena Nandege (third from the left in the picture above), 24, led a Community Dialogue to reconcile the Didinga and Logiri clans in South Sudan's Kidepo Valley county. The two had long been engaged in a seemingly intractable conflict, however, over several weeks of dialogue in March and April, they agreed to end hostilities and live together in peace.

Magdalena is one of our most seasoned peacemakers in South Sudan. She was born in Homiri, a village in Kapoeta State which is located in Chukudum County, where her mother is a farmer. Her desire to help women is the reason why she joined WPDI in the first place.

In her country, many people believe that a woman's only place is in the home. Yet, Magdalena works to prove that this is not true. She has trained experienced officials in peacebuilding and teaches human rights to children. She also frequently leads peace processes among villages in conflict. In April 2019, she decided to address one of the most complex issue in her region, the Didinga – Logiri conflict. For years, there had been cattle raids, abductions, beatings, and killings. The national press had covered some of these incidents. Attempts at reconciliation had been undertaken and failed. Nevertheless, she went to them, spoke to them, and got them to speak to each other, translating what she learned with WPDI into words and ideas they could understand.

She was successful. They signed a peace agreement that was sanctioned by the state and covered in the media. As Magdalena says, ***“There was a picture of me in a paper. It pleased me because it was not just me in this picture. It was a message that women can be leaders and have a real role to play to make peace happen.”***

Since then, Magdalena has been invited to speak at the United Nations both in Geneva and New York, where she has told the world of her work and the need to empower more women to become peacemakers for the sake of South Sudan.

Shaping Peace Together by Teaching Conflict Resolution in Schools



Make Schools More Peaceful

According to UNESCO, almost one in three students (32%) have been bullied by their peers at school at least once in the past month. In all regions except Europe and North America, physical bullying is the most common and sexual bullying is the second most common type of bullying. In Europe and North America, psychological bullying is the most common type of bullying. Cyberbullying affects as many as one in ten children. More than one in three students (36%) has been involved in a physical fight with another student and almost one in three (32.4%) has been physically attacked at least once in the past year. Information about sexual violence perpetrated by peers is limited but evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa suggests that a schoolmate is more likely to be the perpetrator than a teacher, especially for boys.

Source: BEHIND THE NUMBERS: ENDING SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND BULLYING, UNESCO, 2018

When children and youths exist in safe learning environments in which a community of educators and students are emotionally connected, they can better evolve as learners and individuals. However, in many schools and communities, violence, bullying, and other incidents among students occur on a daily basis, impacting academic learning, personal growth, and overall wellbeing. More, their formation as future citizens is jeopardized as they will not be able to learn how to make peace happen within and around them.

A tenet of WPDI is precisely that this capacity to make peace happen within and without is not an innate trait and that it must be learned, especially in communities that have been mired in years or decades of conflict or violence. Teaching Conflict Resolution Education is therefore especially important at a young age, when core values are being shaped sometimes for the rest of people's lives. To foster positive transformation within the schools at which we operate, we have designed a Peace Education platform that combines conceptual and practical dimensions, allowing participants to take an active part in making peace happen at the classroom and school level.



6,000+ children in primary and secondary schools in Uganda, South Sudan, South Africa, Mexico, and the United States have been trained by WPDI in Conflict Resolution Education.



In the United States, our Conflict Resolution Education program, the Domestic Harmonizer Program is implemented in South California, where we have more than 100 peer mediators trained across three schools of the region, impacting **2,500+** students and teachers.

Their impact is being felt on school campuses by students and teachers alike. As Dr. Briana Hinga, an independent evaluator from the University of Southern California (USC) found, the program ***“delivers teachers a completely new toolbox through which they could educate themselves and students about conflict in various contexts and help students navigate challenging problems in their academic classes and personal lives.”***

This is especially relevant in today's climate, according to Dr. Hinga, as primary and secondary school students need to be able to address conflict in their daily lives both inside and outside of school. As her report noted, ***“This particular moment is marked by a political climate [in the United States] that makes salient the utility and necessity of conflict resolution education.”*** As communities around the world are shaken by the COVID-19 crisis or other pressing issues, the next generation of global citizens will need to be able to cope with conflict in a constructive way.

Shaping Peace Together by Expanding Access to Education and Training



Bringing Skills in Vulnerable Areas

For young people living in conflict- and violence-affected areas, poverty, lack of employment opportunities, or insufficient education create conditions that can, in turn, create challenges to peace.

PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, OR TRAINING

PERCENTAGE OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Mexico

South Africa

Uganda

South Sudan

18%

31%

33%

18%

Sources: International Labor Organization and World Bank

Communities have a better chance at building lasting peace if they can access continuous quality training and education. Through our global network of Community Learning Centers (CLCs), WPDI aims to impart knowledge and tangible skills to as many community members as possible in topics like Conflict Resolution Education, Information & Communications Technology, and Business & Entrepreneurship. We also offer specific trainings to broaden our impact on the ground in the places we work.



In 2019, more than **13,000** people have successfully completed WPDI's free, vocational courses at the global network of **13** Community Learning Centers we operate in Mexico, South Sudan, South Africa, and Uganda.



A Community Member Gains New Skills From a WPDI Training, Helping Her Gain a New Position

My name is Harriest Achola. Before I started WPDI's training course in Information & Communications Technology at their Community Learning Center in Gulu, I had little to no understanding of technology. I couldn't even use a computer, and even though I was a classroom teacher, I had few digital skills.

Yet, over the free three-month training, wonderful changes came to my life. I learned about computers, how to use software, access the Internet, and I gained the skills I needed to better my life. After I completed the course, the certificate I gained became added value for my CV and gave me an added advantage over other applicants when I applied to become the Inspector of Schools in the Nwoya District. I'm grateful to say that I received the position, and I credit this to my training with WPDI.

Shaping Peace Together by Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods



Peace and Development are Interconnected

In 2018, the OECD stated that, ***“without action, more than 80% of the world's poorest will be living in fragile contexts by 2030.”*** This makes it clear that **“Fragility poses a major global threat to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”**

Source: OECD Report States of Fragility 2018

To foster economic development in fragile communities, WPDI provides young people and other beneficiaries with vocational trainings and incubation support for social income-generating projects (IGPs) and small businesses (SMEs) that they develop by themselves. These vocational and entrepreneurial programs allow people to generate income for themselves and their families and to enrich their communities by providing relevant services and jobs for local people. Peace and development are two sides of the same coin.



WPDI supports more than **160** income-generating community projects in South Sudan, Mexico, and Uganda, which collectively employ thousands of vulnerable youths.



Jose and Victor, WPDI Youth Peacemakers in Mexico's Chiapas State, Use Their Entrepreneurial Skills to Support Their Community

A telling vindication of our ambition can be found in the work of Victor and Jose, two of the youth peacemakers that we support in San Cristóbal de las Casas, in Chiapas, Mexico. As many indigenous families in Chiapas - one of Mexico's poorest states - lacked access to nutritious and affordable food and suffered from malnutrition, Victor and Jose decided to put what they learned from their training with WPDI into practice. They launched the Healthy Food Production Project, to help local families grow their own produce in order to increase their food intake, improve the quality of their diet, and save money.

The project began with the establishment of a community garden, at which indigenous families were trained on how to grow organic vegetables, tend to livestock, and learn about nutrition. Since the project's launch, about **300** families have started working on the initiative and another **625** people have purchased its goods. In only two years, the initiative has become self-sustainable. This success has been recognized as exemplary, receiving awards from the Mexican government as well as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which saluted the project for promoting food security and the Sustainable Development Goals at large.

Shaping Peace Together by Mobilizing the Power of Sports



Sport has the power to change the world

As Nelson Mandela said about sport, *“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does.”*

For years, we have applied this philosophy in South Sudan and Uganda, notably in the context of our programs for displaced persons. In 2019, the UNHCR reported **79.5 million** displaced persons worldwide and **2.2 million** in for South Sudan.

Sports have a fundamental human appeal. They can connect people across cultures, religions, nationalities, languages, and other divides. When people participate in sporting activities, they learn to respect the dignity of their opponents, the values of teamwork and tolerance, and the importance of fair play and regulations. Sports can, therefore, be an important tool for peacebuilding and reconciliation. That principle is reflected by WPDI’s Peace Through Sports program, which has, in only a few years, brought thousands of youths together to play a variety of sports like football, volleyball, and basketball in camps or settlements for people displaced by conflict in South Sudan and Uganda. The program actively combines sports and peacebuilding, for example, by tying together practice sessions and training workshops or matches with community dialogues or other cultural events. This has proven to be a very successful combination especially in places where different ethnic groups coexist with difficulty.



In the past year, Peace Engagement Day events have directly reached **13,850** people at the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, in Uganda. Additionally, **1,200** settlement residents joined 24 soccer teams supported by WPDI, which participated in five tournaments throughout Uganda in 2019.



Cecilia, a Refugee Living in the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, Becomes the Team Captain of a WPDI Soccer Team

My name is Cecilia and I am an 18-year-old South Sudanese refugee living in the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement since 2013. I am an orphan and take care of my three younger siblings.

WPDI's Peace Through Sports program is very popular here at the settlement – around 250 girls play regularly in five soccer teams. Because I have an interest in sports, I joined one of the teams. Through our daily trainings, I not only gained skills in soccer; I also developed an appreciation of peaceful

coexistence, as the teams are comprised of girls from many tribes, including some that are in conflict back in South Sudan. However, here, Peace Through Sports has transformed and equipped us with an ability to overcome conflict, and we play and engage with our communities in harmony.

Recently, I was elected team captain of one of the teams. In this role, I will continue to spread messages of peace and mobilize other community members at the settlement to participate in WPDI trainings and other programs.



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