

GENERAL REPORT 2023

# AIMING FOR PEACE: WOMEN AND YOUTH AT THE FOREFRONT TO TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES



WHITAKER  
PEACE & DEVELOPMENT  
INITIATIVE

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# Foreword

by Forest Whitaker

Reflecting on the past year's undertakings, I am reminded of the profound responsibility we bear as stewards of peace, advocates for sustainable development, and champions of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The challenges of 2023 have underscored the urgent need for collective action and firm commitment to building a more peaceful and equitable world.

In my role as CEO of WPDI, UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, and Advocate for the SDGs, I have witnessed the transformative power of grassroots initiatives and the resilience of communities striving for peace amidst adversity. From launching new programs in France to expanding efforts in conflict-affected regions like South Sudan and Uganda, each endeavor has highlighted the indomitable spirit of humanity and the enduring hope for a better tomorrow.

The launch of our program in France marks a significant milestone, emphasizing our firm commitment to adapting and innovating in the face of evolving challenges. As we embark on this new chapter, we remain mindful of the unique complexities and uncertainties that accompany each undertaking. Yet, it is precisely in these moments of uncertainty that our resolve is tested, and our dedication to our mission is reaffirmed.

The past year has shown the power of collaboration and partnership in catalyzing positive change. From teaching conflict resolution skills in Ugandan schools to providing start-up grants to aspiring entrepreneurs in Mexico and delivering trauma healing services to communities in South Sudan, each alliance has fortified our collective impact and bolstered our commitment to advancing peace and sustainable development. Additionally, establishing a sports program in South Africa has underscored our dedication to leveraging diverse platforms for promoting peace and empowerment. These partnerships exemplify

our resolute resolve to address pressing challenges and foster resilience worldwide.

As we stand at the midpoint of our journey towards the SDGs, the urgency of our mission becomes ever more apparent in a world at a critical juncture. Rising global insecurity and inequalities, along with the senseless war humanity seems to wage on the planet, threaten peace on many fronts. In his speech setting UN priorities for 2024, the Secretary-General emphasized the critical, vital even, need for peace, reminding us that peace is "a call to action. Our obligation is to act together for peace in all its dimensions."

These words resonate deeply at WPDI, where we have pursued peace through mediation, education, and economic development for years. In moving to increase our efforts in the environmental and climate dimension in the years to come, we are striving to enhance our capacity to fulfill our fundamental mandate: empowering fragile communities on their journey to resilience. This strategic shift not only improves our ongoing projects but also opens doors to new partnerships, reinforcing our commitment to communities where we operate.

In a world facing unprecedented challenges, our mission remains as relevant as ever, offering hope and progress amidst uncertainty. As we navigate this crucial juncture, we are steadfast in our commitment to building a more peaceful and equitable world, knowing that together, we can overcome the challenges ahead.

Peace and Light,

**Forest Whitaker,**  
CEO and Founder WPDI





# Our Mission



WPDI grew from Forest Whitaker's experience of growing up in crime-affected areas of his home country, the United States, his encounters with many young people and women affected by violence as well as the inspiration he drew from such figures as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mandela, and Desmond Tutu. From this personal path emerged a humanist vision of peace as a transformative process powered by everyday people. This vision found its expression in the mission set for WPDI at its creation in 2012, namely to empower people living in vulnerable and fragile areas to become active partners in the transformation of their communities into more resilience, that is secure, productive and sustainable places.

As a Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organization addressing in priority the needs of women and youths, we help community members become (a) mediators who address tensions and conflict between and within communities with competence and confidence, (b) community builders who are equipped to operate at the grassroots, undertaking projects to

disseminate values and knowledge on peace, human rights, or health and wellbeing, (c) entrepreneurs who can create economic opportunities for themselves and for their communities, and, more generally, (d) educators trained to disseminate values, attitudes and behaviors conducive to a culture of peace and resilience.

In our twelve years of operation, we have reached over 1.9 million people directly and indirectly, through programs promoting lasting peace and sustainable development in Uganda, South Sudan, South Africa, Cameroon, Chad, Gabon, Mexico, France, and the United States. Our ambition for the next decade is to reach another 3 million people from fragile areas, pursuing and expanding our strategy based on the principle that conflict and insecurity must be met both by peacebuilding work and by efforts at economic development. In this, our vision is fully aligned with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda in its affirmation that: *"There can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development."*

# Executive Summary



In 2023, WPDI's unwavering commitment to empowering individuals in vulnerable and fragile communities, with a particular focus on youth and women as our essential partners, remained steadfast. **Operating across four regions — Africa, Latin America, North America, and Europe — and spanning nine countries, including Uganda, South Sudan, South Africa, Cameroon, Chad, Gabon, Mexico, France, and the United States**, our programs saw remarkable growth and progress. **Throughout the year, we reached a total of 288,875 beneficiaries**, a substantial increase from the 174,138 beneficiaries in 2022. This notable expansion reflects both the dedication of our teams and the collaborative efforts of numerous individuals, organizations, and institutions committed to fostering peace.

In the realm of peacebuilding, our efforts reached a broader audience, with the number of beneficiaries increasing substantially from 80,149 in 2022 to 185,054 in 2023. This expansion was mirrored in our outreach to schools, where the number of institutions involved rose from 204 to 331. Additionally, the number of dialogues facilitated by WPDI increased from 131 to 171, showcasing increased community engagement and the effectiveness of our conflict resolution initiatives. Positive outcomes were evident in survey results across multiple countries, with 87% of trainees reporting the application of learned skills in their personal or professional lives. Stakeholders'

overwhelmingly positive feedback on our peace education programs in schools reaffirmed the program's efficacy in promoting peaceful attitudes and behaviors.

Our livelihood support initiatives continued to yield positive outcomes, with the number of beneficiaries in vocational training programs reaching a total of 11,253. This growth was accompanied by an increase in businesses created, rising from 169 to 328. The success of our business training initiatives, particularly among vulnerable youths, exemplified our targeted approach to addressing specific demographic needs and creating positive career outcomes for participants. The impressive survival rate of supported businesses, standing at 94%, underscored the effectiveness of our business incubation program in nurturing sustainable livelihoods and economic independence within communities.

In the realm of health and wellbeing, WPDI's trauma healing and sexual and reproductive health programs continued to expand their reach, engaging over 5,500 participants. Notably, our efforts in Uganda, where the program was piloted and subsequently scaled up, proved auspicious, as we began mainstreaming health and wellbeing activities into our programs on the ground.

Lastly, WPDI's "Peace Through Sports" program experienced remarkable growth, with the total number of beneficiaries rising from 11,604 in 2022 to 56,099 in 2023. This major expansion reflects the convening power of sports as a vehicle for promoting peace and social cohesion, with thousands participating in various sportive activities across South Sudan, Uganda, and South Africa.

As we reflect on the achievements of 2023, we recognize the paramount importance of building resilience in areas affected by multifaceted challenges. Resilience, defined as the autonomous capacity to face challenges and external shocks, requires a long-term investment and patient nurturing. This is precisely the purpose of WPDI: to support communities in rekindling their resilience where it has been shackled. The activities described in this report exemplify the patient work of our teams and beneficiaries to cultivate resilience amidst adversity, fostering the conditions for communities to thrive in the face of challenges.





# 2023 Overview



In 2023, WPD I continued to strengthen its impact which translated into results that reached more beneficiaries thanks to the efforts that our staff and volunteers make on the ground every day. Indeed, this year, WPD I counts over 288,000 beneficiaries reached through 328 new businesses launched, training programs across 331 schools, and 171 Community Dialogues conducted, among other activities under the program. The positive feedback we continue to receive from local stakeholders is demonstrated by the increased momentum around our programs this year.

2023 has also been a year of rethinking and innovation. We have undertaken to give added emphasis to our action in the areas of Trauma and Sports along with re-focused efforts in the areas of Peacebuilding and Livelihood.

More broadly, we have also initiated a deep recast of our global strategy in view of mainstreaming environmental and climate concerns into our work to foster the overall resilience capacity of fragile communities and underprivileged individuals.

# 2023 Overview

**2,214**  
Peacemakers



Our Programs Have Reached

**288,875**

Beneficiaries

**16**

Community  
Learning Centers



**742** businesses  
are currently  
supported, including  
328 new businesses  
supported since 2023

**331**  
schools



**37,579**

learners are  
trained in Conflict  
Resolution



**50%** of our  
beneficiaries are  
women and girls

**171**

community dialogues  
were held by our youth  
peacemakers with



**14,256**

trainees



**94,884**

participants in  
peacebuilding events  
at our 16 CLCs

**19,730**

participants



**1,559**

Community Leaders  
were trained in Conflict  
Resolution



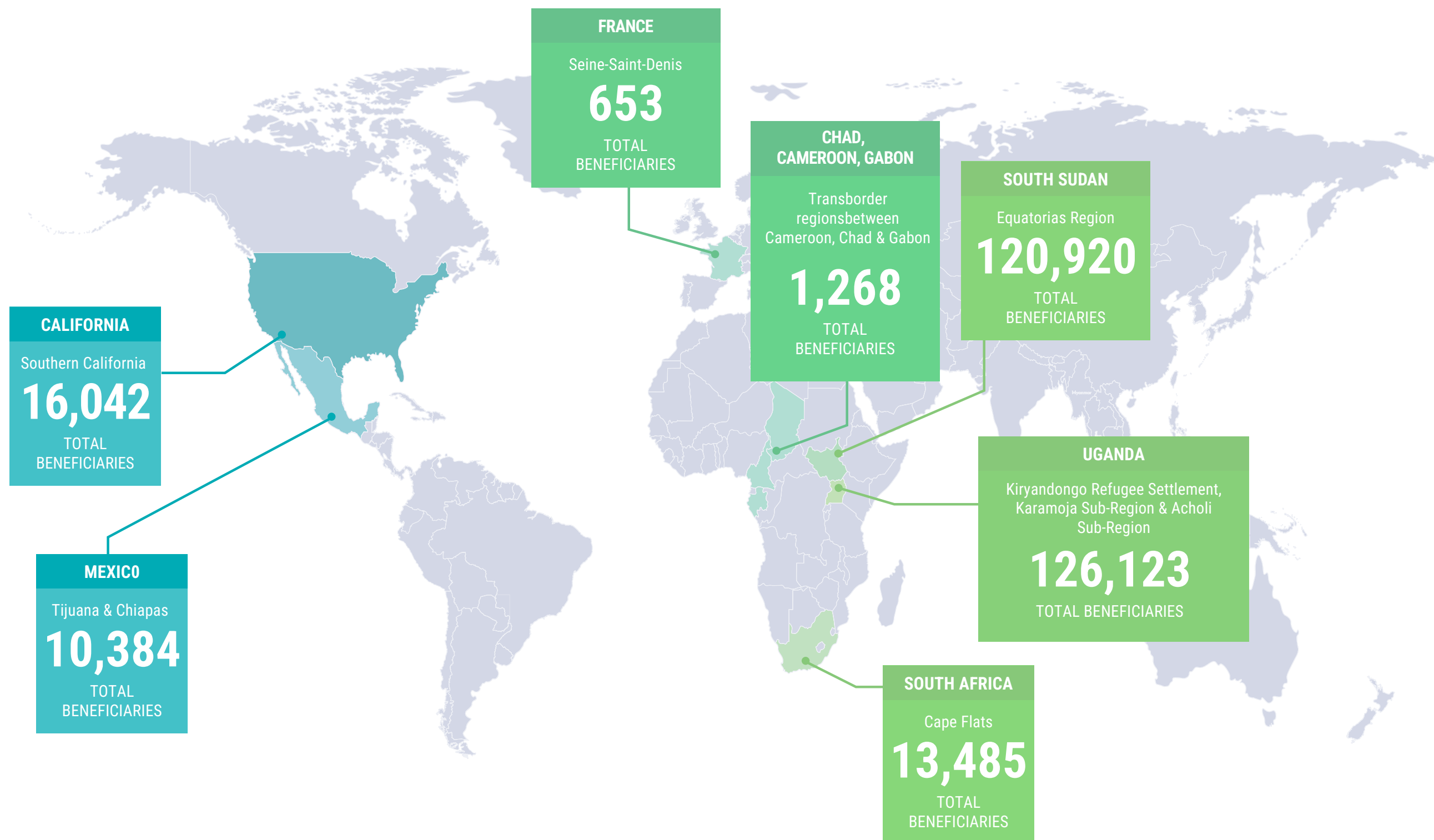
**56,099**

participants in  
sportive activities



# WHERE WE WORK

Total  
beneficiaries **288,875**

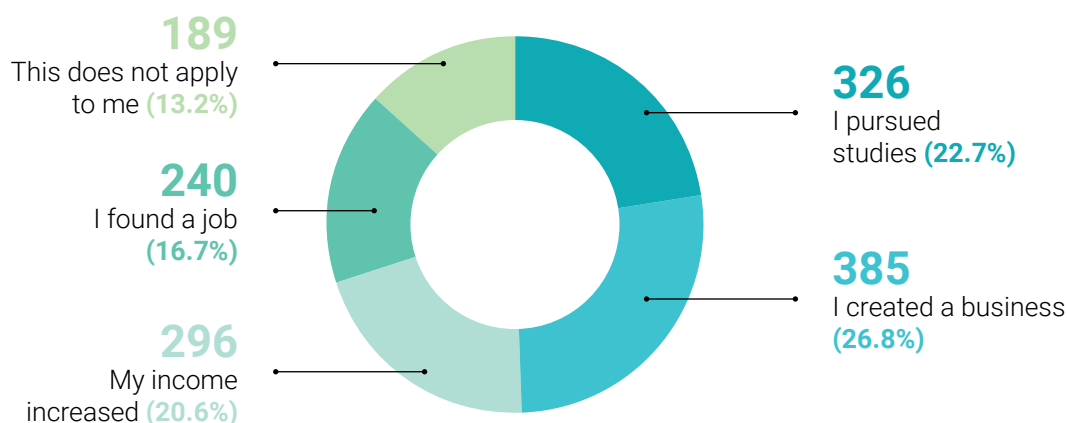




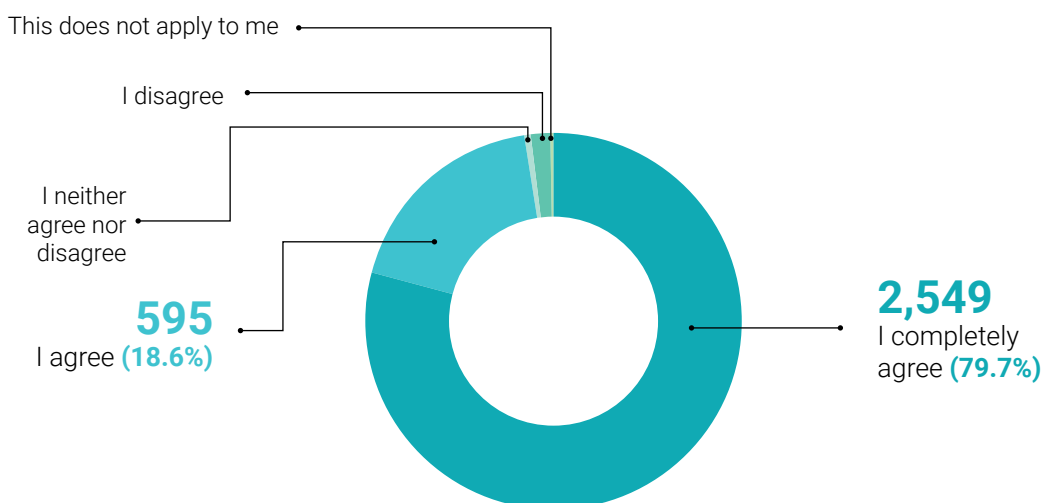
# Post-training Questionnaire

Results of a post-training questionnaire delivered to trainees six-months after graduation to assess the impact of the capacity-building courses. 1,436 beneficiaries responded to the first question and 3,196 responded to the second question.

## Has the program improved your career prospects?



## "I have been able to apply the knowledge and skills learned from WPDI in my personal or professional life"



# Stakeholders Tell us What They Think of WPDI

## South Africa

Feedback on the impact of our entrepreneurship programs

"It gives me great pleasure to write this letter to endorse the work done by the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative within the City of Cape Town. This Initiative is particularly active in 14 of our Mayoral Urban Regeneration Programme (MURP) nodes which we have identified as areas needing various types of investment including into the people of those Communities. The programmes are strategically offered to persons, especially women, living in vulnerable circumstances. Notably at every graduation ceremony I have attended, the women thanked the programme and staff for the invaluable investment into their lives. The women are always appreciative of the opportunity to invest in themselves and to be able to provide a better life for their families, which in turn, I believe uplifts their communities. The focus on entrepreneurial skills also empowers the women to grow their own generational wealth."

**Eddie Andrews,**  
Deputy Mayor, City of Cape Town, South Africa



## South Sudan

Feedback on our programs empowering youths

"As government, we are very thankful to WPDI and to Forest Whitaker for advancing the agenda of peace through empowering young people with skills and knowledge to resolve conflicts, mediate issues and improve their communication, negotiation and leadership skills. For South Sudan to have a bright future, peacebuilding partners like WPDI and the government have to work collaboratively together to plant the seeds of peace and development. WPDI has proven to be a great partner in helping South Sudan in realizing the dream of having a prosperous and peaceful nation, by bringing up these children and youth in a good way. I have observed a lot of improvement in their communication skills, confidence and ability to resolve issues as a result of WPDI's engagement. We are optimistic as a government that there is a bright future ahead and that we'll be passing on the button of leadership to these highly informed, educated and capacitated young leaders ready to do more than what we have achieved in our time."

**Hon. Cirisio Zacharia,**  
Minister for General Education and Instruction,  
Central Equatoria State (CES), South Sudan



## Mexico

Feedback on our Women Empowerment Program

"I work at an agency that continuously seeks to help women lead a full life, free of violence, and with opportunities that allow them to be happy. Traditionally, we had not worked on the topic of Entrepreneurship before. WPDI has been our ally since October 2021, and it has been truly life-changing for the women who come to this Institute. We have been able to support WPDI's work by promoting their training and, later, by helping them with their "Bootcamp" competitions. We will continue to collaborate with WPDI for as long as they allow us to do so, as we fully acknowledge the great help they provide to the women of Tijuana. Our city has the highest levels of gender-based violence in the entire country, so efforts like these are rare and must be valued."

**Perla Angel,**  
Coordinator of Studies and Projects at the Municipal  
Institute for Women in Tijuana, Mexico



## France

Feedback on the inauguration of our new Community Learning Center

"It is with great pleasure that I returned to the Community Learning Center of the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative today. I am very proud to have such a project in our city, in our community, led by a public figure like Forest Whitaker who sets an example. I am always eager to work with companies and associations to build a better future for ALL our youth. I thank once again Forest Whitaker and his team and congratulate all the volunteers who have participated. This is the beginning of a long partnership!"

**Karine Franclet,**  
Mayor of Aubervilliers, France



## Uganda

Feedback on our work in the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement

"WPDI is one of the strongest and most visible peacebuilding partners at the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement. The level of commitment to championing peace and peaceful coexistence in schools and respective communities is commendable."

**Emmanuel Turyangenda,**  
Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Uganda





# Vectors of Change

A key shortcoming of communities affected by fragility as a combination of chronic conflict, violence, poverty and marginalization, is the lack of endogenous forces that they can mobilize to face changes and challenges in a sustainable and resilient manner. Generating such endogenous forces requires an ongoing availability of skills, expertise, and information that communities must have at their hand over extended periods of time so that a critical mass of individuals can be equipped to be the ones who will drive positive change both daily and in case of extraordinary circumstances, such as natural disasters, economic shocks or episodes of violence.

To ensure that communities where we operate can afford such resources, our first effort when we start a program there is to establish vectors of change which are locally-based platforms to channel key resources at the grassroots. WPDI has created two such vectors, cohorts of young leaders, the Youth Peacemakers, who are trained and tasked to initiate transformative change, and a network of Community Learning Centers (CLCs), where individuals can find safe spaces for learning skills and values.



# Mobilizing Youth Leaders to Drive Change at the Grassroots

Lead Youth Peacemakers

262



Uganda:

94



South Sudan:

95



South Africa:

42



Mexico:

31

Local Youth Peacemakers

1,952



129,931 Individuals reached by Lead Peacemakers

The Youth Peacemakers are a highly strategic vector of change on the ground. They are groups of young women and men that we establish in collaboration with local governmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure full recognition by the community.

The selected youth undergo a one-year Training of Trainers program covering areas such as Conflict Resolution, ICT, Business and Entrepreneurship, and Trauma Awareness. Subsequently, they are supported as they initiate initiatives in their home communities. Equipped with these skills, they become transformative insiders who spearhead projects to bring about long-term positive change on behalf of WPDI. These

projects may include mediation processes, Conflict Resolution or Business and Entrepreneurship trainings, and the establishment of small businesses for themselves and others.

Serving as representatives of WPDI on the ground, their actions enable WPDI to fulfill its mission in underprivileged and remote areas, leveraging a multiplier effect. In this regard, our 262 Youth Peacemakers continued to impress us in 2023 by collectively reaching 129,931 beneficiaries – nearly 500 for each of them. This underscores the significant value they represent for WPDI and their communities.



## Peacemaker promotes gender equality through community dialogues with youths in South Africa

WPDI Youth Peacemaker Vuyisa, who is part of a community Football club, organized a series of dialogues to discuss sustainable solutions in breaking social norms and gender stereotypes that perpetuate violence. Most importantly, the idea was to try to understand how these cultural practices normalize violence. He engaged youths from his community on this topic. Vuyisa decided to start regular sessions in conjunction with other influential stakeholders to discuss and debate with these youths and identify daily issues that perpetuate gender discrimination and lead to violence because these challenges begin at home.



### Feedback from the Youth Peacemaker

"I want to give these young minds a chance to better their lives because I was also given a chance by WPDI. I believe that young people make up the majority of the world's population, so if we start teaching our youths, especially those from our communities, notions of equality, we can achieve transformative change. Thank you WPDI for empowering me to empower other youths in my community."

**Vuyisa Hillie**



### Feedback from a local stakeholder

"The challenges faced by youths in our communities are multifaceted, ranging from geographical isolation to the belief that their circumstances define their destinies. I want to thank WPDI for believing in our youth. Most of the youths in this community participate in criminal and gang-related violent activities because they are often overlooked. Keeping them occupied will drive a positive change on a monumental scale. These sessions will not only empower them but liberate them from a cycle of limited opportunities and despair. Thank you once again WPDI."

**Oudrey Nickleson**



### Feedback from a community member

"We are so proud to see youths from our community at the forefront of giving back and being involved in such activities. We thank WPDI for supporting our youths to be active and engaged young people that are dedicated to serving their community. I believe that children's behavior is partly shaped by the type of upbringing obtained at home, regardless of it being good or bad and the same is transferred to the next generation and these sessions are a great start to nip it in the bud. Thank you WPDI."

**Akazole Jama**

## Why it stands out

The community dialogue here is a continuous process, with regularly scheduled sessions as the challenge is deeply rooted in the community. To date, Vuyisa is engaged with 30 young boys mostly from Delft and Khayelitsha area. Each session has a volunteer from various public departments such as nurses, social workers and SAPS (South African Police Service) who volunteer to engage with the youths to motivate and encourage them to better their communities.

The ultimate goal is to change their mindset and to give them tools and knowledge to improve gender perception in their communities. Beyond the gender issue, these community dialogues also promote individual empowerment and a broader philosophy around tolerance.

These dialogue sessions stand out from the typical community dialogues organized by WPDI as they are continuous. Each session addresses a particular issue but the recurrent nature also plays a part in the long-term impact WPDI aims to have in the community. Indeed, through these sessions a network of youths are breaking the cycle of violence around them and collectively creating opportunities for change.

# Improving Local Access to Skills, Knowledge and Connectivity

At present,  
we operate in

16

Community Learning Centers across Uganda,  
South Sudan, South Africa, Mexico and France

Trainees in  
vocational  
courses

11,253

Trainees  
in Conflict  
Resolution  
Education

3,584

Participants  
in Cinema for  
Peace

13,046

Participants in  
CLC Advocacy  
campaigns

28,869

Yearly CLC  
visitors

40,700

For communities to become more peaceful, prosperous and resilient, safe spaces are needed that everyone can attend to obtain new knowledge, acquire vocational skills for improved employability, learn transformative civic attitudes, initiate projects, exchange with others or simply chill. This is the very purpose of the Community Learning Centers (CLCs) that we establish in remote or underserved areas, providing local residents with key resources that they can use to benefit themselves - including for career development - and their communities - including for community-building action.

Besides the free certified courses that we offer there in the areas of our core curriculum - Conflict Resolution, Entrepreneurship and ICT – community members can access connected computers, services in Trauma Healing and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), business incubation services, as well as peace-conducive activities based on sports, cinema, advocacy campaigns and cultural events. In the end, whatever we bring is for the community to appropriate and, in turn, tap to drive change in their communities.



WPD I Community Learning Center in Yambio,  
Western Equatoria State, South Sudan



WPD I Community Learning Center in San Cristóbal  
de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico



## WPDI France: One Year of Implementation and an Official Launch

In May, Forest Whitaker took the opportunity of the launch ceremony of WPDI's newest Community Learning Center (CLC) in Aubervilliers, France, to advocate for the strengthening of SDG-bound initiatives including in fragile areas of industrialized countries, stressing the universality of the 2030 Agenda. The ceremony proved to be a unique opportunity for delivering such a message since it was attended by key officials, including the Minister of Cities and Housing as well as representatives of local and national government, the private sector and of civil society. The event included presentations and exchanges with beneficiaries, highlighting the real-life impact of the WPDI CLCs as hubs for creating access to information and knowledge at the community-level. All stakeholders reaffirmed their commitment to fostering development, strengthening programs, and collaboratively transforming local communities in the diverse and vibrant greater Paris region.

The Community Learning Center in Aubervilliers, located in the Seine-Saint-Denis department, just north of Paris, offers free courses in ICT, Entrepreneurship, and Conflict Resolution for youths, women, and vulnerable groups, strategically addressing economic challenges in the region, considered the poorest in metropolitan France with over a quarter of its residents living below the poverty line.







# Our Programs In Action

Our initiatives are rooted in the approach aimed at helping communities long affected by conflict, poverty, and fragility build resources of their own improve their capacity for peace, sustainability, and resilience. Aiming to empower individuals, women, and youths in priority, we have designed a series of programs that we implement through four main strategic avenues: Peacebuilding, Livelihood, Health & Wellbeing, and Sports. Under this framework, we carry a diversity of activities that are geared towards long-term results that local communities can fully appropriate and recognize as resources for the future that they chose for themselves.



# Peacebuilding as Grassroots Empowerment

Based on our principles of grassroots empowerment and local appropriation, our teams and youth leaders mediate conflicts, advocate for values of peace and resilience, and teach conflict resolutions skills to community members at large, including local leaders as well as students and teachers that we train directly in their schools. In turn, our beneficiaries become our partners in the pursuit of peace in their communities.





# Community Dialogues for Sowing Seeds of Peace



**171**

Community Dialogues held



Uganda

**117**



South Sudan

**32**



South Africa

**12**



Mexico

**9**



France

**1**

**19,730** Participants in dialogues

A key mission of our Youth Peacemakers is to conduct mediation and peace processes among groups in conflict or conduct sensitization campaigns on issues of relevance for the community, including human rights and gender equality. These dialogues are often organized at the direct request of local leaders or national and international organizations. In addition, Youth Peacemakers provide trainings in conflict resolution and mediation to local leaders, including civil servants, police personnel and religious representatives.



# WPDl Provides Platform for Resolution of Cattle Farmer Conflict in The Greater Mundri Community, South Sudan

Following floods and water shortages as well as internal conflicts among themselves, herders from Tali, Terekeka County, Central Equatoria State, were forced to migrate through the counties of Juba, Lainya, Yei and Mundri, causing widespread disruption to regional agricultural activities. As the influx of cattle into the Greater Mundri community threatened to turn into a full out conflict, WPDl, in collaboration with local authorities, community leaders and stakeholders, organized a Community Dialogue at the end of March focused on resolving the dispute in a peaceful manner.

## Resolutions initially agreed upon by participants of the dialogue:



For accountability, follow-up and follow-through, WPDl organized follow-up dialogues to ensure the resolutions were being implemented and to continue to track progress. The main outcomes are that (i) the communities involved work to foster a platform to maintain conversations and continue to resolve ongoing conflicts; and (ii) the participants agreed to work collaboratively for socio-economic development in Lirya Payam.



”

“I want to thank WPDl and the community leaders for initiating this dialogue. There was a lot of fear in the hearts of the people of Greater Mundri that the cattle herders would cause insecurity or destroy their farms, but today the issue of fear has been settled and we have agreed to remove the cattle from farmlands within 30 days. We shall continue with the spirit of dialogue whenever there is an issue because WPDl has shown us the peaceful way to resolve issues.”

**Marial Achuei, Chief of the Tali Payam**

# Training Community Leaders to Cultivate Peace

WPDl delivers Conflict Resolution Education training to Community Leaders. These trainings are often done after a Community Dialogue in order to ensure that the steps toward peace are sustained in the long-term. Empowering those with influence and authority over local communities is indeed key to progressively disseminating a culture of peace that will eventually have a transformative impact on the life of these communities.

**1,559** Local leaders trained

Mexico  
**26**

Uganda  
**695**

South Sudan  
**421**

South Africa  
**417**

"I knew we needed Conflict Resolution training as leaders to save our communities. Our areas are heading for the rocks. I knew we had to stand up and do something and that something was the time we've spent here acquiring so many ideas and practical ways to build peace. My neighbor told me to contact WPDl and I am thankful that we did, because through all this we are now making our communities safer and more peaceful together."

**Beaular Pienaar,**  
Community Leader in South Africa



"The topic is extremely important and applies in any field. It was very interesting as each week we were advancing and acquiring skills to be able to mediate conflicts in the best way. The content used in the course is diverse and attractive to all of us. In training we always have a moment to express ourselves about what we have learned in addition to comments and feedback."

**Guadalupe Elizabeth Ochoa Castro,**  
Community leader in Tijuana, Mexico



"My appreciation goes to Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative for providing the necessary support to the leaders training that will greatly improve our service delivery as leaders of Karamoja region, with knowledge gained on human rights, diversity am confident the region will greatly improve."

**Lokol Peter,**  
Community leader of the Kaabong District, Uganda



"This training has helped me understand why violence exists in my community. After learning about the violence triangle, I came to know that it is caused by cultural and structural violence that is embedded in my culture and leadership. With this training, I am going to embark on sensitizing my community to understand the causes of conflict. I urge my peers to take such training as it is an opportunity to address issues like cultural and structural violence that contribute to direct violence and conflict at large."

**Mr. Ohisa Joseph,**  
Community Leader from Ikwoto County, South Sudan





## WPDI Leads Training Workshop For Over 100 Members Of Parliament On Leadership, Peace & Human Rights in South Sudan



Eastern Equatoria State in South Sudan, like much of the country, grapples with ongoing conflict and instability. Persistent ethnic tensions and political unrest hinder social cohesion and impede development, exacerbating displacement and a fragile security environment. Urgent attention and concerted efforts are needed to address these underlying issues for lasting peace and stability.

In response to these challenges, WPDI believes in coordinated and mutually reinforcing efforts toward lasting peace and sustainable development. Stability fosters an environment conducive to education, healthcare, and economic growth, enabling communities to thrive and contribute to South Sudan's progress.

To mainstream this approach, WPDI recently conducted a capacity-building training workshop on leadership, peace, and human rights for honorable members of the Eastern Equatoria State Legislature Assembly (EESLA) and local organizations. The theme,

"Peace for Sustainable Development," brought together participants from eight counties of Eastern Equatoria.

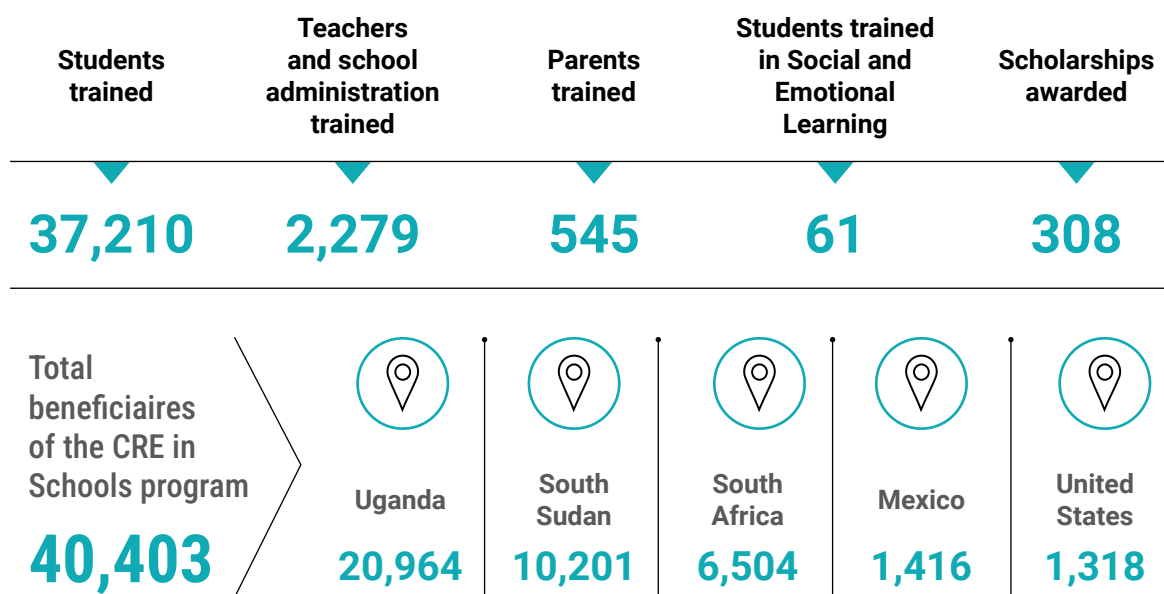
The five-day program, attended by over 100 individuals, including the Speaker of the parliament and committee chairpersons, aimed to promote good governance, respect for human rights, and grassroots peacebuilding. It fostered a spirit of alliance and networking among parliamentarians, emphasizing collaboration, dialogue, tolerance, and inclusion.

In his closing remarks, the Right Honourable Speaker, Mr. Severino Maria Januge, highlighted the transformative impact of the training on himself and stressed the importance of working closely with grassroots partners to address local issues and act as agents of peace.

Feedback from participants, such as Honorable Kokol Michael MP, underscored the value of the training in enhancing leadership and conflict resolution skills, with tangible benefits in resolving disputes and promoting peace within communities.

# Bringing Skills and Values for Peace Into Schools

**331** Partner schools



If peace and nonviolence are to become an everyday feature of daily culture in our target areas, it is important to instill in the minds of children and adolescents, values and skill providing them with a capacity to react positively to tensions and conflict that arise in their environments. To disseminate such a culture of peace and nonviolence, our youth are trained to provide trainings in conflict resolution and nonviolent communication to students as well as teachers, which contributes to improving both interpersonal relations across schools and academic outcomes.

"Before joining the Peace Club at my school, I was a problem causer. I used to like fighting and bullying my friends because I was stubborn and I did not have skills in managing my emotions. Many friends abandoned me, but since I joined the Peace Club, I have changed. I can smile with my friends, control my emotions and use the skills of mediation and negotiation to resolve conflict issues. My friends and parents could not believe the great change in my behaviors because I have become so peaceful and those friends that left me have now returned. I have learned to say sorry and to forgive those who wrong me. Thank you WPDI for the change you have brought to my life."

**Rita Azo,**  
A pupil at Green Hill, Juba, South Sudan



## Promoting Access to School for 240 Girls in Uganda



### Renewing our Efforts to Empower Girls from the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement

In 2022, the WPDJ scholarship program had a significant impact on the lives of 150 girls who were recruited and enrolled in formal secondary education. Some of these students have successfully completed their education, while others are expected to graduate this year. The program has not only laid a foundation for these students but has also created opportunities for securing grants at the university level from other supporting organizations.

Feedback received from various stakeholders, including school teachers, matrons, patrons, students, the Office of the Prime Minister, and local leaders, indicates that the scholarship program has had a profound effect on the lives of refugee children. It has successfully challenged cultural beliefs that discouraged girls from attending school, shifting

perceptions among parents and guardians. This change has led to improved school enrollment and discipline, particularly among female students.

The scholarship program has fostered harmony among students from different tribes, encouraging mutual participation in organized school activities. This has resulted in a greater appreciation for cultural diversities among the students. In 2023, 15 girls who completed their Advance level education were admitted to universities such as Kigumba Cooperative College, Bugema University, Kumi University, East African Bible College, and Kampala International University. These students will continue to be supported by the program through scholarships and backstopping support.

### In 2023, the program expanded to the Karamoja Sub-Region

In 2023, WPDJ initiated a scholarship program for adolescent girls in the Karamoja Sub-Region of Uganda. In March, 285 applications were submitted from the 9 regional districts, all from adolescent girls in underprivileged, marginalized communities with limited access to education. Out of these, 75 applicants were admitted to the scholarship program, aiming to provide funding for each girl throughout their secondary school education. This support includes covering school supplies and fees, addressing the financial barriers that would otherwise hinder these girls' access to education.



## Meet One of the Scholarship Recipients



Oyella Mary Immaculate, aged 22 has been a recipient of the scholarship since 2022.



### Purpose of the scholarship:

"With this opportunity, I was able to complete my Advance level (Senior 6) Education and will now be able to pursue my degree in Development studies at Gulu University effective this year. I've been participating in leadership programs since I was in primary school."



### Personal context:

"Pursuing a university degree is a dream I have always had. However, being the first daughter of 8 siblings, born in a family with a limited financial means, my parents work tirelessly but earn barely enough to provide for our family. This leaves my family with very constrained finances which would not allow me to pursue further studies. It is with this background that I applied for this scholarship and I was accepted. I was the first member of my family to benefit from any scholarship, and that is why I fully utilize this opportunity and scored more than the required points to take me to the next level and I am currently preparing to enroll at University."



### Next steps:

"I hope that me being able to pursue higher education sets an example to other young women out there, given the misogyny and patriarchy that our society grapples with. My goal is to use my education to inspire other girls in my community and country. I want to pursue Development studies because I want to be a voice to the underprivileged in the society. In the near future, I plan to openly advocate for Human Rights, especially for refugees. My passion for this field was inspired by the strong urge to break the stereotypes on women."





# Training Teachers in Conflict Resolution Education

**2,279** Teachers and Administration Staff trained in schools



Uganda

**1,314**



South Sudan

**351**



South Africa

**292**



Mexico

**64**



United States

**258**

In addition to training the pupils and students in Conflict Resolution, WPDI also delivers Conflict Resolution Education training to school teachers. The training builds and strengthens their capacity to better manage daily conflicts and promote peace in school and in their communities.

## USA - Building the skills of teachers of students with special needs

We had the opportunity to do a staff development in-service with a group of 12 teachers, administrators and staff at Switzer Learning Center, in Torrance, California as part of an offering during a professional development day for the school. The Switzer Learning Center staff and faculty are a group of 25 special education teachers, paraprofessionals, therapists, and administrators.

Switzer Learning Center is a unique school that provides highly individualized and responsive educational programs for neurodivergent and special needs students. Switzer Learning Center operates a nonpublic school licensed by the California Department of Education and provides clinical support services. They serve youth, teens, and young adults in grades 5-12 (ages 10-22) with learning impairments, including Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), dyslexia, executive functioning difficulties (ADHD), and nonverbal learning disorders (NVLD). Switzer serves approximately 70 students, with over 76% coming from LAUSD schools.

The training provided educators with an overview of Conflict Resolution Education concepts, such as analyzing conflict as unmet needs and considering conflict resolution styles, sources, and stages.

This was so well received by the teachers and administrators that they are pursuing a partnership MOU with WPDI to implement the Domestic Harmonizer Program beginning in 2024.



## Educators' Assessment of WPDl's Impact in their Schools

Assessed through surveys that we have conducted across various schools, spanning regions in Africa (South Africa, South Sudan, and Uganda), Mexico, and the United States (Southern California), the program for Peace Education and Conflict Resolution in Schools generally garnered very positive feedback. The 2023 WPDl survey collected insightful responses from 536 stakeholders, representing 20% of the total number of teachers and educators who participated in the program there, offering a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact.

Respondent roles were diverse, with educators comprising the majority (76%), followed by various administrative roles and health/psychosocial officers. The program's reach extended to

teachers, headmasters, parents, and other school stakeholders, ensuring a holistic perspective. There is an overwhelming agreement (99%) on the program's effectiveness in teaching and promoting peaceful attitudes, self-discipline, and nonviolence, consistently observed across all regions. This consensus underscores the program's universal positive impact on fostering a culture of conflict resolution.

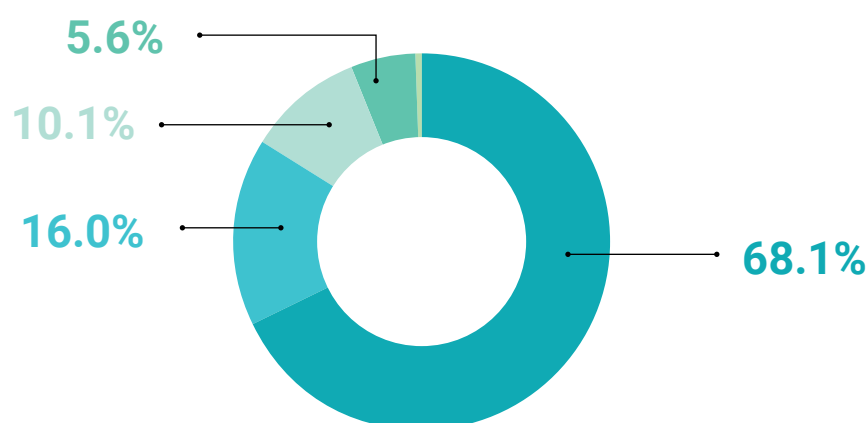
Similarly, stakeholders widely recognized the program as a valuable contribution to addressing bullying and conflict in schools, with 98% expressing agreement. This consensus emphasizes the program's efficacy in mitigating violence and fostering safer learning environments.



Crucially, 100% of respondents either agreed (37%) or fully agreed (63%) that the program was effective in enhancing learning conditions in their schools. This consensus underscores the affirmative impact of WPDI's program on the educational environment, crucial, especially in regions grappling with challenges like insecurity and poverty. This consensus indicates the program's capability to foster a positive and conducive atmosphere for learners. The impact assessment illustrated a transformative journey, with 68% perceiving the program as beneficial for their school as a whole, showcasing its potential to go beyond individual learners and create a positive school-wide environment. Very few respondents reported no significant impact, emphasizing the overall positive influence across different settings.

Do you agree with the following statement: "The Peace Education program of WPDI helps to improve learning conditions for the learners of the school"		
I completely agree	335	63%
I agree	196	37%
I disagree	1	0%
No opinion	1	0%

#### "How do you see the impact of WPDI's program on your school?" (responses from 536 educators)



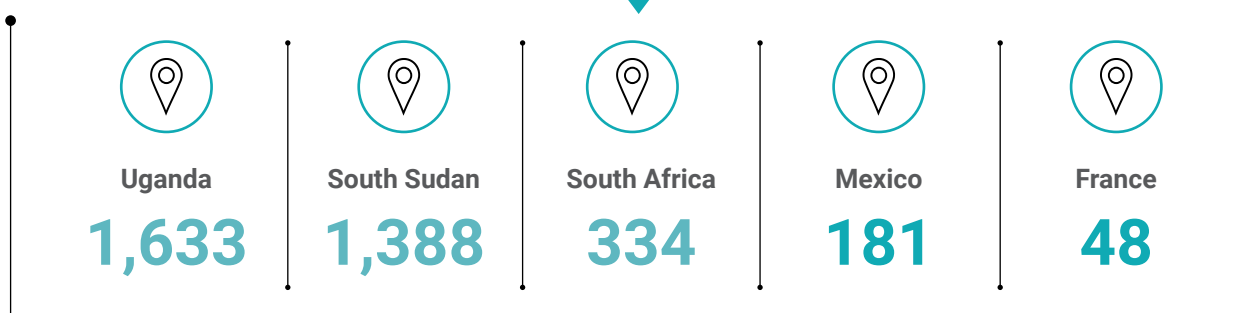
- I see the program as beneficial for the school as a whole (transformative impact)
- I saw a positive impact on the learners enrolled in the program as well as on a few others (moderate impact)
- I see the program as beneficial for many if not most learners across the school (significant impact)
- I saw a positive impact on the learners enrolled in the program but not beyond (narrow impact)
- I have no opinion on this matter

Testimonials from various regions echoed these findings, emphasizing the program's effectiveness in promoting peaceful attitudes. South Africa highlighted improved discipline, South Sudan showcased transformative impacts and a commitment to long-term change, while Uganda expressed gratitude for the program's comprehensive impact. In Southern California, positive sentiments were echoed, emphasizing the program's effectiveness in equipping students with essential skills. Challenges in implementation and support were acknowledged, but enthusiasm and early positive impacts were evident, emphasizing the need for broader reach and consistent support.

Suggestions for improvement from testimonials in Africa and Southern California highlighted the consistent call for expansion and educator training, emphasizing inclusivity, community involvement, continuous training, and innovative approaches for optimal effectiveness and reach. These findings will guide WPDI's ongoing efforts to enhance the program's positive impact, fostering a culture of peace, understanding, and responsible conflict resolution.

# Conflict Resolution Skills For Everyone in the Community

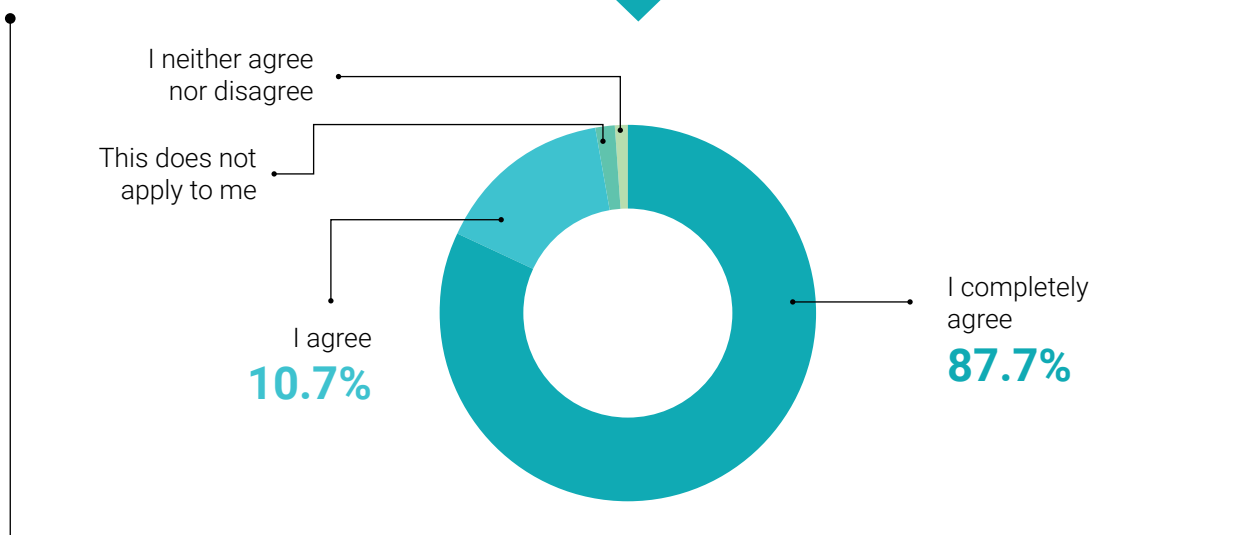
**3,584** Conflict Resolution Education trainees



The program contributes to improved relationships within communities, addressing both individual and group dynamics. Additionally, we provide customized Human Rights training, concentrating on individuals' rights and responsibilities.

The implementation of Conflict Resolution Education and specialized Human Rights training has fostered harmonious coexistence among community members. Beneficiary feedback attests to the reinforcement of their capabilities in conflict management and successful mediation.

**"I have been able to apply the knowledge and skills learned from WPDl in my personal or professional life" (responses by 1,762 former trainees in Conflict Resolution Education)**



The survey results from WPDl's conflict resolution education programs in 2023 across South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, Mexico, and the United States reveal significant engagement and positive outcomes. With 89% of trainees reporting the application of learned skills in their personal or professional lives, the program demonstrates tangible impact. Moreover, 97% found the program beneficial for their career prospects, indicating its efficacy in enhancing employability and economic opportunities. A notable 95% of respondents recommended the program to others, underscoring its perceived value and effectiveness. However, challenges persist, with a portion of trainees experiencing limited appropriation levels, suggesting a need for further support and follow-up. Nonetheless, these findings highlight the program's success in equipping participants with valuable conflict resolution skills and fostering positive outcomes in both personal and professional spheres.





## Feedback from African Children and Youth Enrolled in WPDl's Program for Conflict Resolution

The 2023 survey circulated among children and youths who took WPDl's conflict resolution and socio-emotional learning program yielded instructive insights into the program's transformative effects. With 1,374 respondents across South Sudan, South Africa, and Uganda, a notable 99% affirm the practical application of acquired knowledge in their personal and professional lives. Notably, the appropriation levels of the training unveil a nuanced engagement, with 67% experiencing strong to significant appropriation. This suggests regular to occasional

interaction among supportive trainees, fostering a community committed to conflict resolution principles. The substantial number of respondents attests to the program's widespread impact, reinforcing its mission to instill a culture of peace and effective conflict resolution in the daily lives of participants. The detailed statistics further underline the program's success in not just imparting skills but in cultivating a tangible and enduring influence on the youth, contributing to the broader vision of a harmonious and conflict-free society.

## Rehabilitative Training for youths in Detention Centers

WPDl's peacebuilding training and trauma healing support aided youths in detention centers in both Tijuana, Mexico, and the Karamoja sub-region of Uganda. In Tijuana, from February to May, young individuals successfully completed a comprehensive program tailored to address their unique circumstances, including topics such as conflict resolution, meditation, and mediation practices. These sessions were designed to instill a sense of responsibility for peace among all participants, fostering an environment of harmony within the detention center. Moreover, in the Karamoja sub-region, trauma support sessions were meticulously crafted to address the multifaceted challenges faced by female inmates, ranging from wrongful arrests to concerns about family welfare. Through a phased approach, counseling sessions incorporated Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques to empower clients in reconciling thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Testimonies from both inmates and prison staff attest to the tangible improvements in mental wellbeing and conflict resolution skills, underscoring the significance of these interventions in fostering resilience and promoting peace within detention centers and beyond.



# Advocacy Campaigns to Give Peace a Voice

**28,869** Participants in CLC Advocacy campaigns



Uganda

**14,254**



South Sudan

**13,229**



South Africa

**638**



Mexico

**406**



France

**342**

WPDI's advocacy campaigns aim to inspire, enable, and empower women and youth as advocates for peace and human rights. By providing platforms for these individuals to confidently voice their concerns and engage in constructive dialogue, WPDI fosters a generation of change agents capable of addressing pressing community challenges. Through this initiative, WPDI seeks to empower youth to amplify their voices on issues impacting peace, health, and productivity, equipping them with the tools to navigate appropriate channels for change. Ultimately, the goal is to cultivate a space to drive sustainable change within communities.

## Advocacy campaign in the Gulu area against teenage pregnancies and school dropout rates

This year, several advocacy campaigns were delivered in villages around Gulu City. The objective was to raise awareness on factors that deter children and youth from pursuing education. The particular focus was on teenage pregnancy and school dropout risks. The delivery of the campaigns were adapted to each context. Indeed, Youth Peacemakers and children delivered awareness raising messages on the radio, a group of women made a presentation in their village to raise awareness on the two issues, and in Kitgum, a group discussion on the themes of school dropout rates and teenage pregnancy engaged all the community members in attendance. A notable success was the multi-generational engagement in these different events. Parents and their children participated and were sensitized on these issues.



"I would like to applaud every child for having turned up in good numbers for this advocacy meeting, and the parents also. WPDI is doing such wonderful work by engaging parents in this fight against the hurdles that distract our children from achieving their dreams."

**Opio Nichola,**  
Responsible for Children's affairs in his local community



"I am very happy for this advocacy program during the holiday break because it urges, us, the parents to be vigilant for our children and support them to focus more on their future. Thank you WPDI for this wonderful opportunity."

**Santina Akullu**



# Cinema For Peace

**13,046** Participants in Cinema for Peace



Uganda

**7,231**



South Sudan

**4,795**



South Africa

**660**



Mexico

**360**

The Cinema for Peace initiative is one of WPDl's programs designed to create a platform for youth and community members to interact, share ideas, make new friends, forge ways of peaceful co-existence and behavioral change. Educational films are screened for children and youths as well as members of the public. Projections are followed by group discussions during which members of the audience share and debate on the themes brought forward by the film. The objective is to create a moment for self-reflection, to understand how events in the film resonate with their own experiences.





## UNESCO Campus Day: Forest Whitaker joins 450 students for special screening of 'For The Sake of Peace'



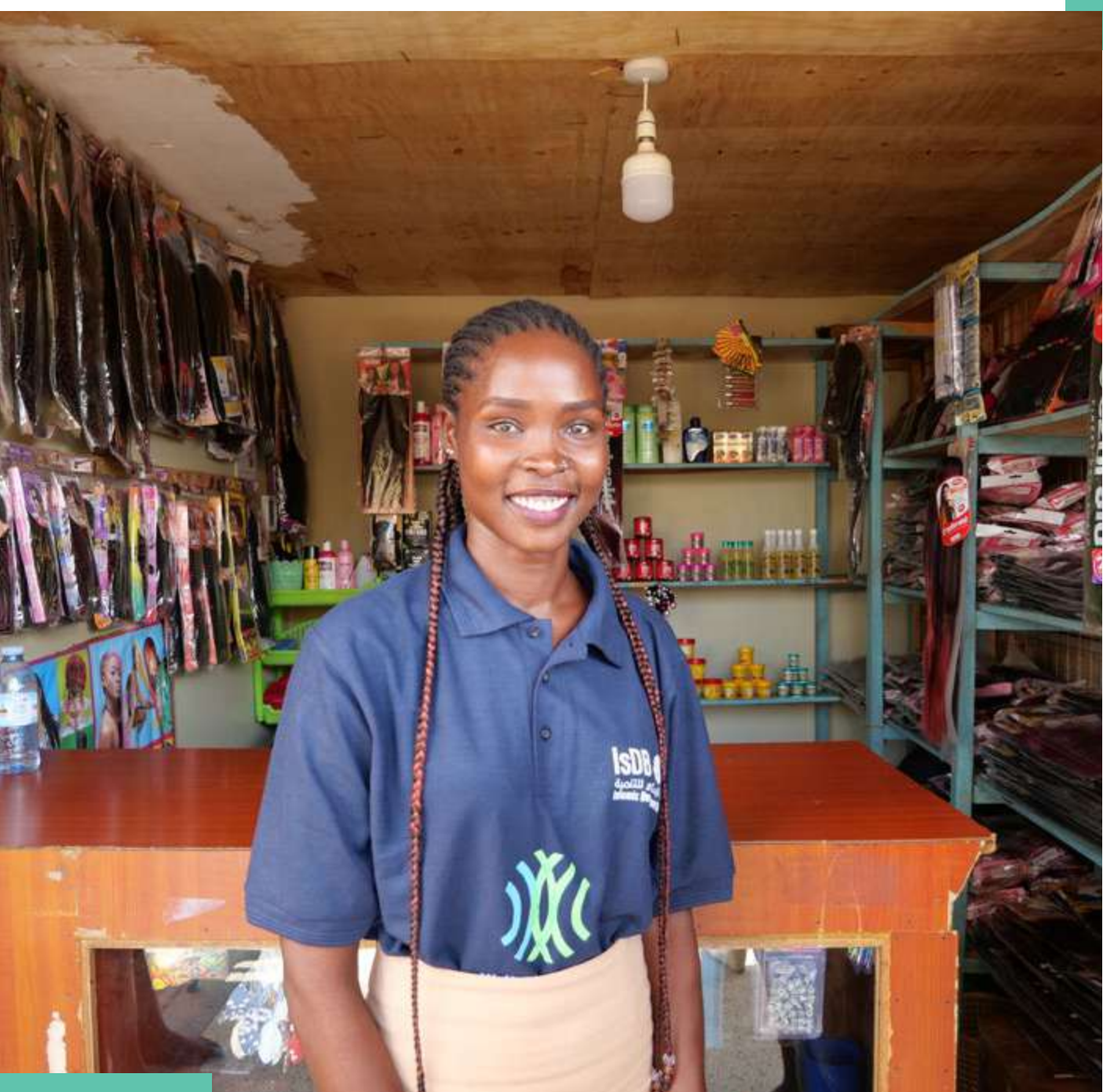
On UNESCO Campus Day, a special event featured the screening of “For the Sake of Peace,” a documentary co-produced by WPDJ, Significant Productions, and R2 Production. Forest Whitaker, along with 450 students from the Paris region, attended the screening and participated in a Q&A session. The film highlights WPDJ Youth Peacemakers Nandegge and Gatjang, illustrating their efforts to bring peace to war-torn South Sudan.

Previously presented at the Cannes Film Festival, the documentary showcases the resilience of young individuals working for peace amid ongoing conflict in South Sudan. Gatjang utilizes sports to promote peace in a refugee camp, and Nandegge, a young mother, acts as a skilled mediator in the Kidepo Valley, addressing long-standing conflicts. The film underscores the determination of youth to build peace despite challenging circumstances.

During the Q&A session, students asked pertinent questions about the conflict in South Sudan and the specific actions taken by the Youth Peacemakers. The enthusiasm of French youth, able to empathize with their peers continents away facing different situations, demonstrated a powerful expression of solidarity, showcasing the relevance of UNESCO’s mandate and its inspiring impact on global youth.

# Livelihood: Opportunities for Socio-Economic Empowerment

Central to our work is the ambition to foster economic resilience and autonomy, chiefly by providing vocational skills, access to start up grants and incubation services. Taken together, these actions contribute to improving economic conditions not just for direct beneficiaries as they find jobs or create businesses, but also for their communities, as the added revenues and services foster added prosperity and vibrancy.

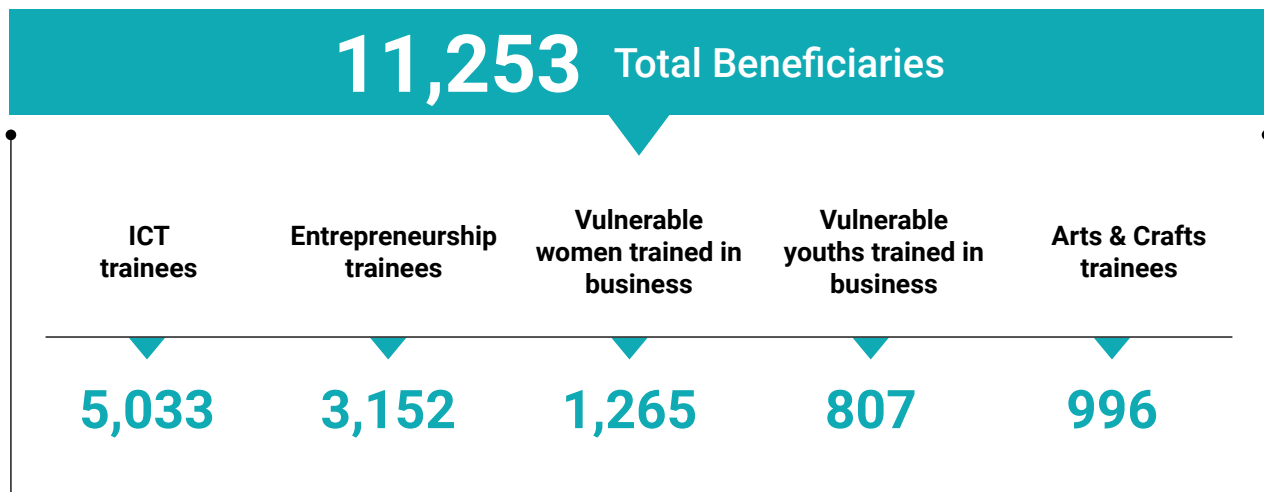




# Vocational Skills for Personal and Career Development

WPDI's vocational training program in remote and underprivileged areas serves as a cornerstone for empowering individuals with practical skills crucial for enhancing employability and fostering self-confidence. The notable increase in the number of trainees in ICT, entrepreneurship, and arts & crafts courses in 2023 reflects the growing demand for diverse skill sets in today's job market. In 2023, we were particularly satisfied of the success met by the business training for vulnerable youths, reflecting our targeted effort to address the specific needs of this demographic group. The overall expansion of the program underscores its effectiveness in reaching a broader audience.

Through these vocational courses, WPDI not only equips beneficiaries with the tools to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors but also instills a sense of empowerment and agency, laying the groundwork for sustainable livelihoods and economic independence within these communities.



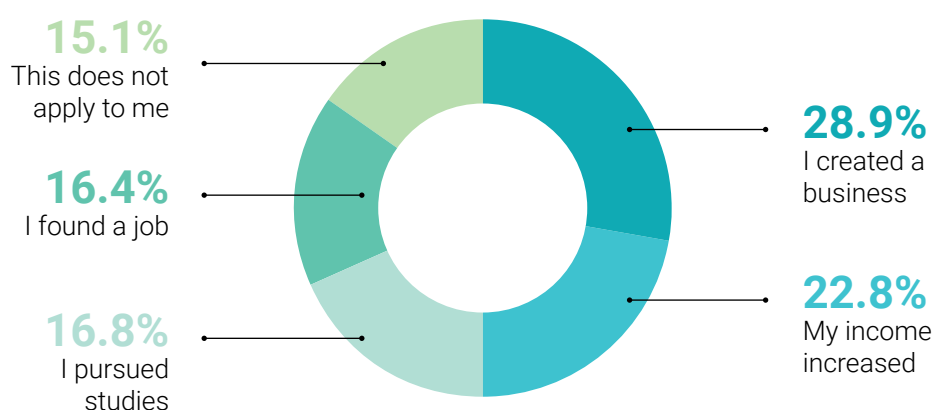


## Vocational Training Survey Results

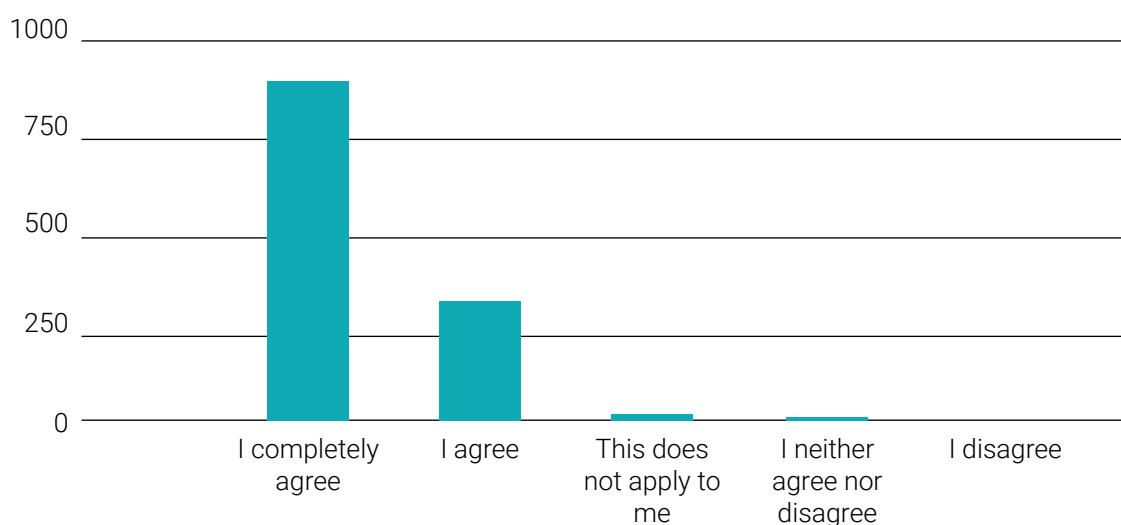
The 2023 survey data from WPDl offers a comprehensive glimpse into the tangible impact of its vocational training initiatives spanning South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, and Mexico. With 1,268 responses collected, it reveals a substantial affirmation from both male and female trainees regarding the practical application of acquired skills in their personal or professional endeavors.

Notably, 94.9% of all vocational trainees agreed or strongly agreed that they could apply the skills learned from WPDl in their personal or professional life, with 28.9% establishing their own business, 22.8% reporting an increase in income, and 16.8% finding a job. When juxtaposed with the results from 2022 and 2021, the data shows an upward trend in positive career outcomes, underscoring the program's growing effectiveness and its pivotal role in fostering sustainable livelihoods and economic empowerment within marginalized communities.

### 'Has the program improved your career prospects?' (1,268 responses)



### 'I have been able to apply the knowledge and skills learned from WPDl in my personal or professional life' (1,268 responses)



# Business and Entrepreneurship

**3,152** Entrepreneurship trainees



Uganda

**1,008**



South Sudan

**1,019**



South Africa

**395**



Cameroon/  
Chad/Gabon

**238**



Mexico

**415**



France

**77**

**Vulnerable women  
trained in business**

**1,265**

**Vulnerable youths  
trained in business**

**807**

"The training was well presented and enjoyable which is important to really learn new things. It has impacted my life as a business owner as I gained very practical skills such as record keeping or financial management which is crucial to effectively run a business. I have a bar and the business has improved thanks to this training."

**Julius Odong,**  
Business trainee from Karamoja, Uganda



"I have a business providing charging services for phones and other electronic devices. What helped me the most in this training is customer care and market assessment, understanding client needs and improving my services"

**Taban Ofish,**  
Business trainee from Eastern Equatoria  
State, South Sudan



## Topics covered in the curriculum

- Entrepreneurship and Personal Awareness
- Business Idea Generation
- Business Identification
- Screening & Selection of Business Ideas
- Best Idea & Business Plan Development
- Marketing & Market Assessment
- Communication Skills

- Financial Management
- Work Plan & Budgeting
- Recording Keeping
- Forms & Type Of Businesses
- Business Planning & Its Environment
- Risk Management
- Leadership & Group Dynamics
- Self Confidence
- Business Conflict Management
- Business Ethics & Social Responsibilities



# Information and Communication Technologies

**5,033** ICT trainees



Uganda

**1,470**



South Sudan

**2,183**



South Africa

**368**



Mexico

**951**



France

**61**

Operating in frequently isolated and underserved regions, a fundamental aspect of our mission involves enhancing the capabilities of our beneficiaries to engage with ICT, facilitating communication on a global scale, and generating opportunities for personal and professional growth. Our training courses are meticulously designed to cater to the unique circumstances of our target communities. The needs vary based on whether these communities are situated in developing countries or marginalized areas within industrialized nations.

To ensure effective learning and practical application of ICT skills, our Community Learning Centers (CLCs) offer trainees access to Internet-capable computers and online training modules. Additionally, we provide, through our partnership with Ericsson, training programs specifically designed for children, including on robotics programming.

Throughout the year, we witnessed a substantial influx of registrations from community members expressing eagerness to participate in our ICT-certified short courses at the CLCs. Continuing the trend from previous years, these skills have proven indispensable tools for enhancing access to knowledge and elevating the employability of our beneficiaries.

"Thank you very much for this training course. When I arrived, I didn't even know how to use a computer. Today, I can confidently progress through my administrative tasks. Moreover, the computer loan has greatly enabled me to work from home."

**Bilaly Camara,**  
ICT trainee from France



## Topics included in ICT courses across WPDI offices

- Computer Literacy
- Using Excel
- Online searches
- Email drafting and text editing
- Programming
- Digital Literacy
- Cyber Security





## One year after a much-anticipated launch, 143 trainees have successfully completed their courses in the IT Lab

**ICT  
Trainees**

**51**

**Business and  
Entrepreneurship Trainees**

**48**

**Conflict Resolution Education  
Trainees**

**44**

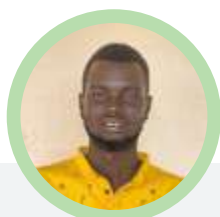


Over the past year, we expanded our ICT offerings by establishing an IT Lab in the Refugee Settlement of Kiryandongo. These additions have broadened our reach, engaging more users and creating additional avenues for personal development. This initiative, made possible through collaboration with MIT ReACT and the R2 digital agency, created a unique e-learning platform funded by the Western Union Foundation.

The IT Lab offers flexible and reliable training, enabling individuals to access online courses independently. An extension of our Community Learning Center in Kiryandongo, equipped with 25 laptops, serves as the hub for this initiative.

The e-learning platform, accessible at <https://itlab-uganda.wpdi.org/>, provides free registration for trainees, offering courses in Conflict Resolution Education, Business & Entrepreneurship, and ICT at Basic, Intermediate, or Advanced levels. Materials are presented in video and PDF formats, with quizzes and a final test leading to certification.

To cater to varying preferences, modules are available both online and offline. The offline version accommodates those less comfortable with computers or preferring a classroom experience with in-person interaction. Indeed, support is available both in-person, where WPDI staff guide trainees through content, and self-paced, allowing independent learning.



"Online courses were very convenient. It is the self-paced learning that I enjoyed as I was able to navigate through the content at my own speed and gained more knowledge in conflict management without stepping in a classroom. I have taken my time to understand the full course, topic by topic, so as to replicate it out in my community.

Thanks WPDI for such a wonderful initiative we can now access all the courses anywhere at our fingertips."

**Debele Cyrus,**  
Trainee from Gulu , Uganda



"I am so grateful that WPDI uploaded their training sessions online. I have enjoyed attending the sessions with guidance from Elias (ICT trainer). At first, I found it hard to register and log in since it was my first time however, I received assistance, and logged in. Currently I have completed the business basic level training and obtained my certificate. I intend to resume at an intermediate level. I am now better equipped with the knowledge and skills to operate a business."

**Lagu James,**  
A South Sudanese aged 27 years from  
cluster K in Kiryandongo Refugee  
Settlement, Uganda



# Arts and Crafts

996 Arts & Craft trainees



Uganda

773



South Sudan

36



Mexico

187

The Arts and Crafts training enables participants to understand and appreciate the work of others. The benefits of an education in Arts and Crafts and Design for the trainees at this stage extends far beyond competence in the subject itself (and the ability to apply it through life). Indeed, it develops perseverance, sensibility and self-reliance. Depending on the country in which the course is delivered, the topics covered may vary between the following:

- Craft bags
- Liquid detergent
- Tie and dye
- Introduction to color
- Flare dress, Gadas
- Round dress, straight dress
- Shorts
- Introduction to machine and its parts
- Peddling and straight line
- Dancing
- Art as a form of therapy



In Tijuana, WPDJ introduced a new component to its activities – a collaboration with artist and painter Leticia Abegail Gutiérrez. She delivered her first Arts and Crafts sessions in the last quarter of the year.

The focus of this collaboration is on women who are survivors of gender-based violence, with Ms. Gutiérrez, herself a survivor. Together, the team and the artist conducted sessions covering “art-therapy,” self-awareness, and meditation tools.

This initiative is aimed at fostering healing and self-discovery.

# The Business Bootcamp

**328** Businesses created in 2023

Uganda

**107**

South Sudan

**113**

South Africa

**49**

Cameroon/  
Chad/Gabon

**7**

Mexico

**43**

France

**9**

**742** Total active businesses supported by WPD

Uganda

**385**

South Sudan

**167**

South Africa

**110**

Cameroon/  
Chad/Gabon

**7**

Mexico

**64**

France

**9**

In today's dynamic economic landscape, fostering entrepreneurship is crucial for sustainable development and community empowerment. WPD stands at the forefront of this effort, offering aspiring entrepreneurs a transformative journey towards business success. Through our comprehensive business incubation program, we provide participants with not just short-term support, but a long-term commitment to their growth and prosperity. Our approach is rooted in training beneficiaries for at least three months and remaining by their side for a minimum of two years, ensuring their businesses have optimal changes of thriving. This dedication yields significant results, with a staggering 94% survival rate among businesses supported—an affirmation of our effective strategies.

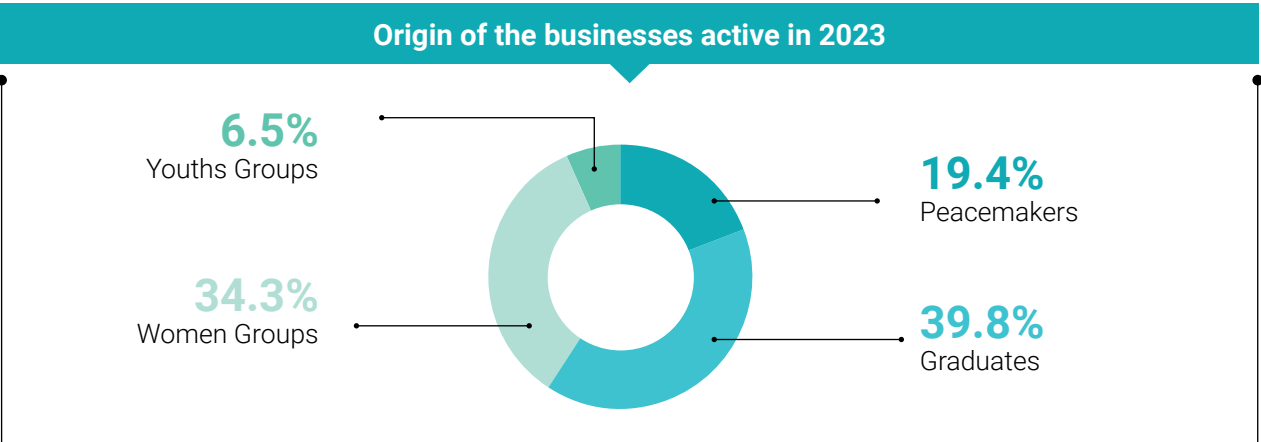
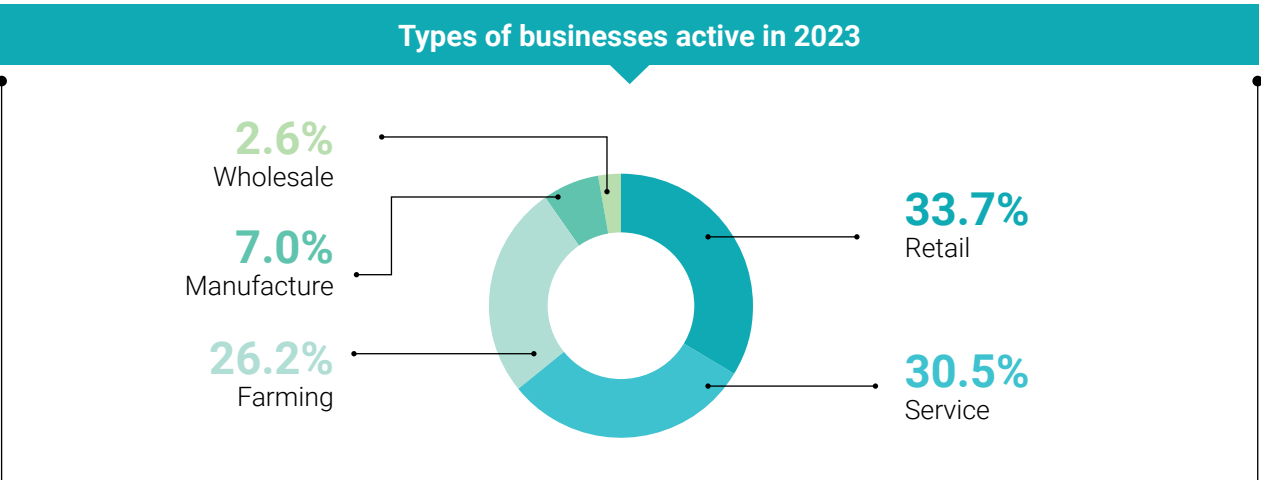
Our program encompasses vocational training, cooperative business development, and SME opportunities, enabling participants to enhance their career prospects and realize their entrepreneurial dreams. Moreover, successful graduates gain access to business plan competitions, where promising ideas are selected for further incubation. If we compare the results of 2023 with those of 2022, we can observe a significant growth in the number of businesses supported, with an emphasis on sectors like farming and retail, as well as an increase in the number of beneficiaries from 19,400 in 2022 to 20,700 in 2023, showcasing WPD's continued commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and sustainable development. As we continue to champion entrepreneurship, WPD remains committed to fostering sustainable growth and prosperity worldwide.





# Breakdown of the businesses supported by WPDl

The data provided encompasses the origins and types of 742 businesses established since 2017 across Africa, Latin America, and Europe. Regarding their origin, these enterprises stem from various sources: 19% originated from Peacemakers, 40% from Graduates, 34% from Women Groups, and 6% from Youth Groups. In terms of the types of businesses established, they fall into distinct categories: 33.7% are involved in Retail, 30.5% in Service, 26.2% in Farming, 7% in Manufacture, and 2.6% in Wholesale. These figures highlight the diverse origins and economic activities pursued within our global initiatives, showcasing the breadth of impact across different regions and sectors.



# The Women's Livelihood Program

**1,265** Vulnerable women trained in business

**Uganda**  
**306**

**South Africa**  
**786**

**Mexico**  
**104**

**France**  
**69**

**105** Businesses launched by vulnerable women in 2023

**Uganda**  
**42**

**South Africa**  
**42**

**Mexico**  
**14**

**France**  
**7**

For underprivileged women living in places affected by conflict, poverty and marginalization, all the obstacles to gender equity and empowerment are redoubled. Yet, as survivors of violence, trauma, exclusion and discrimination, the women from these areas often have developed bottomless resources in terms of initiative and resilience. This is an immense potential for transformation with that WPDI has made it one of its missions to mobilize and support women by designing and implementing a gender-specific platform, the Women's Livelihood Program. The basic purpose of the program is to provide vocational skills to underprivileged women who originate from various backgrounds, including women from marginalized township as in South Africa, refugee women as in Uganda and Tijuana, or indigenous women as in Chiapas. A number of these women will be selected to receive financial support to develop or strengthen businesses that can be cooperative ventures. With the years, the Women's Livelihood Program has proved to be a highly successful approach to meet many of our objectives by helping to generate revenues and, beyond that, by helping to demonstrate that empowered women are a unique treasure for their communities.

In 2022, WPDI had launched the Women's Livelihood Program in Cape Town, South Africa, in partnership with the L'Oréal Fund for Women. This initiative addressed the COVID-19 pandemic's disproportionate impact on underprivileged women, focusing on empowering them through entrepreneurship training. Following its success, with 750 women graduating and 40 businesses funded in the inaugural Business Plan Competition, the project was renewed for 2023, with a new 750-strong cohort and monthly sessions to continue support for the 2022 graduates on their entrepreneurial journeys. In Uganda, vulnerable women receive capacity-building training in various counties, towns, and villages, addressing their inability to commute to Community Learning Centers. Business trainings are supplemented by literacy and numeracy workshops, leading to the launch of 42 cooperative businesses by 306 women, often related to agriculture, benefiting the community at large. In South Sudan, in collaboration with SkinnyDipped, a new entrepreneurship program for underprivileged women was launched in 2023, recruiting over 400 women from specific communities in Juba and Terekeka. Following three months of certified training in Business & Entrepreneurship, these women will form 42 cooperative ventures in groups of 10,

registered into Village Savings and Loans Associations to leverage the economic and legal environment in their regions.

In Mexico, we implemented the Women's Livelihood Program in Baja California, in Tijuana, and Chiapas. The WPDI program in Chiapas, where indigenous communities grapple with socio-economic disparities, limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, particularly accentuates the hurdles confronting women, notably in terms of career aspirations. Aiming to build on entrepreneurship to empower women while improving their employability and economic prospects, the Women's Livelihood Program has taken 40 women through our certified Entrepreneurship training course. The trainees were subsequently invited to submit business proposals, four of which were selected by WPDI to be incubated in the coming months. In Tijuana, the complex dynamics of migration define the socio-economic landscape, with the city serving as a nexus for origin, transit, destination, and return for migrants, whose challenges as migrants are compounded by the high levels of instability and organized crime violence that plague Tijuana. In 2023, as a response to these challenges, WPDI partnered with the L'Oréal Fund for Women to empower migrant women through entrepreneurship. Collaborations with prominent organizations such as CMAM, CIM, UNHCR, CESFOM and IMMUGER facilitated outreach and training initiatives for migrant women. The program has successfully kickstarted 10 projects led by vulnerable women, promising tangible socio-economic empowerment within the migrant community.





## A Food Truck in the Cape Flats: Woman Gives Back to her Community by Selling Affordable Food

Beverly Alcock-Kortje serves affordable meals in Bonteheuwel, one of the most underserved area of the Cape Flats. She was one over 900 trainees under our Women's Livelihood Program in 2022. She pitched her project to our Committee of Experts and was among the 40 winning businesses. Since then her business has followed a steady growth. She is intentional on giving back to her community through her business. It is in this spirit that, twice a month, Beverly organizes a charity day to give away food to children most in need in the community. Beverly also seeks to partner with other women entrepreneurs of her community for goods and services needed for her business such as uniforms and cookies.



## Shea Glow Cosmetics: A Tale of Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Success

"Through WPD, we learned to think outside the box, utilizing locally available resources to create a unique product—Shea Cosmetic. This organic

skincare product has not only gained support from the Review Committee but has also found favor in the market. WPD's intervention came at the perfect time, aligning with the birth of our innovative idea. In just a few months, our venture has garnered significant attention, presenting numerous business opportunities. Recently, UN Women invited us to participate in the UN Women Business EXPO, opening doors for further recognition. Additionally, we've been contacted to organize a national EXPO in Jinja on December 7, 2023. As a group of four young women, this marks a significant opportunity, recognizing us as women in business.

Our business model also positively impacts local women in rural areas, where we source our shea nuts. In the first month of production and operation, Shea Glow Cosmetics achieved a noteworthy sale of 980,000 ugx. During the UN Women EXPO, our products—3 body creams, 2 body scrubs, and 5 lip balms—generated a total sale of 165,000 UGX. Profits will be shared equally after a year of operation, fostering a spirit of collaboration within our group.

The interaction with the deputy Country head of UN Women at the expo proved invaluable. We received guidance on obtaining certification marks for quality assurance from the Uganda National Bureau of Standards—a process we had already initiated with the support of WPD and the review team. This certification, once achieved, will undoubtedly expand our market reach nationwide and beyond."



## The Weavers of Peace Project in Gabon, Cameroon and Chad

In 2021, WPDl and UNESCO forged a partnership to launch a program in Gabon, Cameroon, and Chad. Titled “Young People, Weavers of Peace,” the initiative aimed to establish a network of 1,800 young leaders dedicated to fostering peace and development in the cross-border regions of these three countries. These regions, marked by their fragility and susceptibility to conflict, insecurity, and violence, grapple with profound socio-economic challenges, resulting in pervasive poverty and limited prospects for young people. The primary goal of the “Weavers of Peace” project was to offer youths diverse perspectives and opportunities in life.

Among the 1,800 youths enrolled in the Weavers of Peace Project, 434 of them were specifically enrolled in a Business and Entrepreneurship program led and implemented by WPDl, embodying our Business Bootcamp program. Following intensive training delivered at the community level, the trainees formed

groups, prepared their business ideas, and presented them to a jury as part of a Business Plan Competition organized by WPDl.

In 2023, 103 youth entrepreneurs (of whom 58% are female) and the 7 projects they presented were selected as winners of the Business Plan Competition in the Southern region of Cameroon. They received seed funding and support from WPDl and will continue to be mentored by the local stakeholders who were engaged in the program.

These social development projects, we hope, will help boost socio-economic growth in these volatile border regions and provide real purpose to youths at risk of losing their way or being dragged into a spiral of illicit activities. WPDl firmly believes these business programs can make a real difference to the future prospects of youth participants and their communities, making these places more sustainable and vibrant.

Youths trained in Business  
and Entrepreneurship

**434**

Entrepreneurs  
supported by WPDl

**103**

Businesses  
created

**7**





# Health and Wellbeing: Pathways to Inner Peace

To make peace with other people, we must first be at peace with ourselves. However, in places affected by chronic violence and poverty, too many individuals experience multifaceted forms of trauma and psychosocial suffering. In this light, our programs on health and wellbeing aim to provide dedicated services in terms of trauma healing or Sexual & Reproductive Health, and at raising the awareness of communities on the importance of these issues for individual wellbeing and collective resilience.



# Trauma Healing Services for Improved Resilience

**2,571** Trauma healing participants

There are two main objectives of this program. The first is to raise awareness on the importance of mental health and advocate against stigma surrounding mental health issues, and the second is to provide counselling sessions to, or signpost to the appropriate care, individuals in need of support. The following are some of the activities or services that are provided:

- Trauma healing awareness sessions in schools and in the community to fight against stigma, raise awareness, and introduce the different mental issues that might affect people within the community.
- Screenings for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) and other mental health disorders to help identify those with different issues and assess them to give an entry point or guidance into their counseling therapy (this is done using the WPDI structured Post Traumatic Stress Diagnostic Scale or PDS scale).
- Provision of Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) for those with PTSD (this includes

cognitive behavioral therapy, psycho education, testimonies and life line narration). NET is a short-term, culturally sensitive treatment approach. It focuses on both therapy and the clients' rights. A survivor undergoes a maximum of eight counseling sessions.

- Follow-ups and home visits are a continuous activity for every survivor during their therapy sessions and after recovery to constantly track their wellbeing and provide guidance on the next actions to be taken as well as avoiding relapse of the trauma.



"I joined WPDI in 2017. Since 2018, I have been on an assignment to guide individuals through the challenging but transformative process of healing from trauma. My own journey into this field started with my personal experience that forever changed my perception on the power of resilience and recovery. As I explore into the field of trauma healing, I became a WPDI certified trainer, mixing my personal perception with evidence-based practices. Every time I facilitate a trauma healing session, I witness the incredible resilience that exists in each participant. It's so exciting to see individuals transform their pain into strength, using their experiences as a promoter for personal growth. Thank you WPDI for empowering me and my fellow youth to become advocates for trauma healing in the community."

**Obale Robert, 30, a youth Peacemaker at WPDI Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, Uganda**





## Expanding the Trauma Healing Program

In 2023, recognizing the shortage of mental health services in the countries where WPDI operates, and the far-reaching impacts of unaddressed trauma on individuals and communities, we decided to expand our Trauma Healing program. With the support of the People's Postcode Lottery, WPDI will expand the program's reach in South Sudan and Uganda, where we had piloted the program, notably with displacement and conflict survivors. We have also taken steps to launch the program in South Africa. By expanding the Trauma Healing program, we ambition to contribute to the overall wellbeing and resilience of communities, fostering environments conducive to sustainable development and peace.

# Sexual and Reproductive Health

WPDI SRH intervention aims to:

- Improve access and utilization of SRH services (including contraception),
- Build the capacity of institutions to deliver quality Family Planning and Reproductive Health services through the establishment of functional school health clubs and sensitization and awareness campaigns at the health facilities respectively.

In order to achieve the above objectives, WPDI is supporting access and retention of adolescent girls and young people in school through ensuring functional school health clubs that are able to create awareness and sensitization of learners on SRH issues.

As support to professional staff, our Youth Peacemakers were trained on topics that included family planning, menstrual hygiene, sexuality and gender, peer education, referral, communication and facilitation skills. They were also trained to be able to conduct outreach and referrals in their communities.

## 2,932 Sexual & Reproductive Health participants



# Peace Through Sports

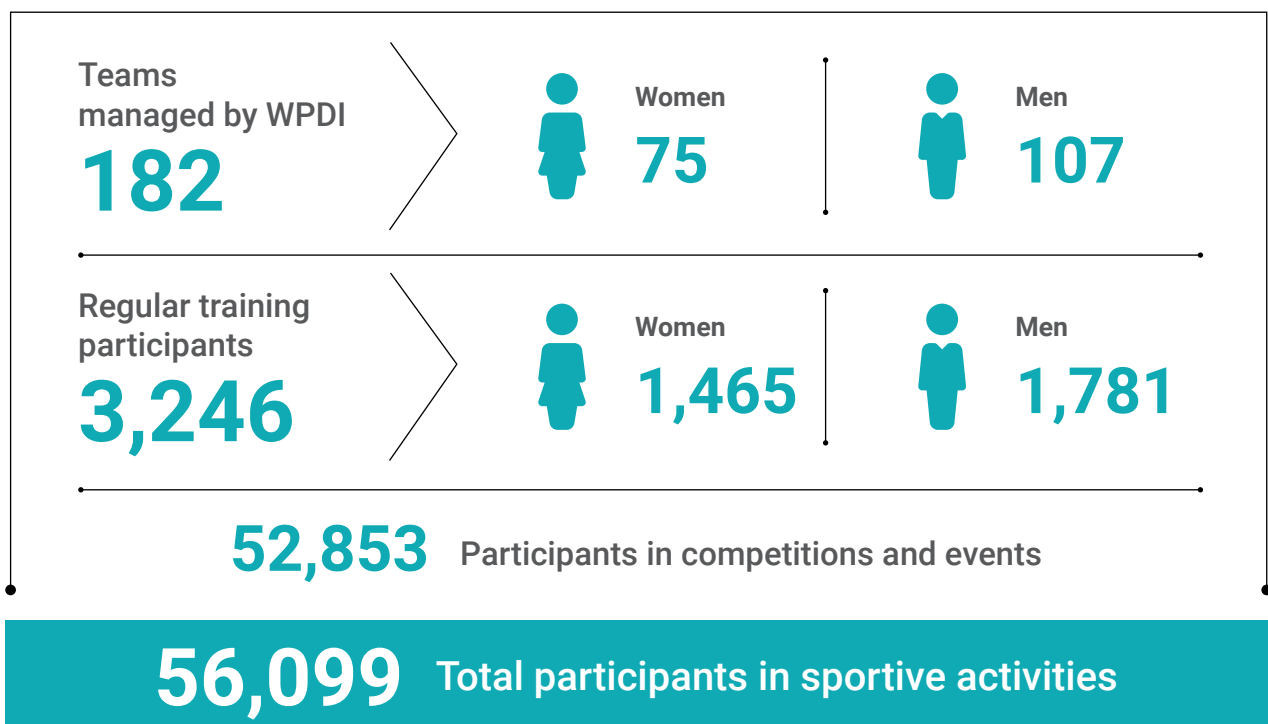
Sportive activities and events can be opportunities for starting dialogues, forging acceptance, and even ending conflicts. Our Peace Through Sports program is a vehicle for connecting children, youths and their communities through their love of sports and instill in them values of mutual respect, inclusion, and fair play, contributing to build a culture of peace rooted in the daily lives of individuals and communities.



# Mobilizing the Power of Sports for Healthy Bodies and Peaceful Minds

The “Peace Through Sports” program, a cornerstone of WPDI’s initiatives in South Sudan, Uganda, and now South Africa, harnesses the universal appeal of sports to foster peace and social cohesion. With 182 teams managed by WPDI, including 75 women’s teams and 107 men’s teams, the program has successfully engaged 3,246 regular participants, comprising 1,465 women and 1,781 men. As part of the program, they took part in weekly sportive practice and trainings offered by WPDI in Conflict Resolution and vocational areas. These figures underscore the program’s inclusive nature, empowering both genders to participate actively in sports and community-

building activities. Notably, 52,853 individuals have participated in various sportive activities, and engaged in competitive events. The recent partnership with NBA Africa in South Africa’s Cape Flats further amplifies the program’s reach, providing a tangible platform for promoting peace and unity among diverse communities. As sports serve as a conduit for dialogue and mutual understanding, WPDI continues to leverage its “Peace Through Sports” initiative to foster a culture of peace rooted in inclusivity, respect, and fair play across borders and boundaries.





## A New Basketball Court for Cape Town



In November, NBA Africa and WPDJ unveiled a brand new basketball court at Cornflower Sports Grounds in Athlone, Cape Town, South Africa that will host year-round youth basketball development programming and serve the broader Athlone community.

The court was unveiled at a ribbon cutting ceremony by Forest Whitaker, Deputy Mayor of Cape Town Eddie Andrews, and NBA Africa CEO Victor Williams. Following the ceremony, approximately 100 boys and girls aged 10-15 participated in a Jr. NBA clinic and peace activity led by the WPDJ Youth Peacemakers Network, WPDJ's flagship program that fosters young leaders in conflict regions.

The court will host activities as part of WPDJ's Peace Through Sports program, to foster peace and harmony among youths through sports and peacebuilding training courses.





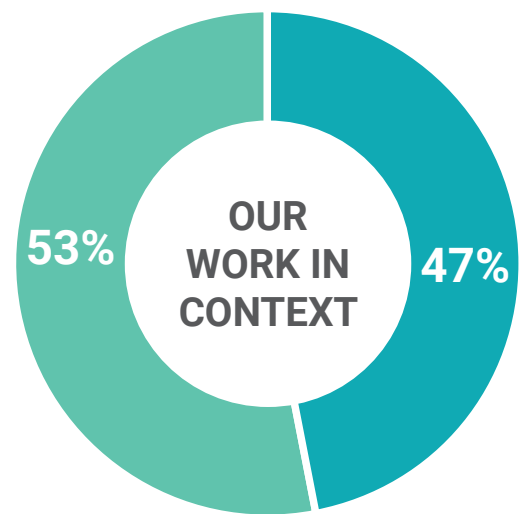
# Financials



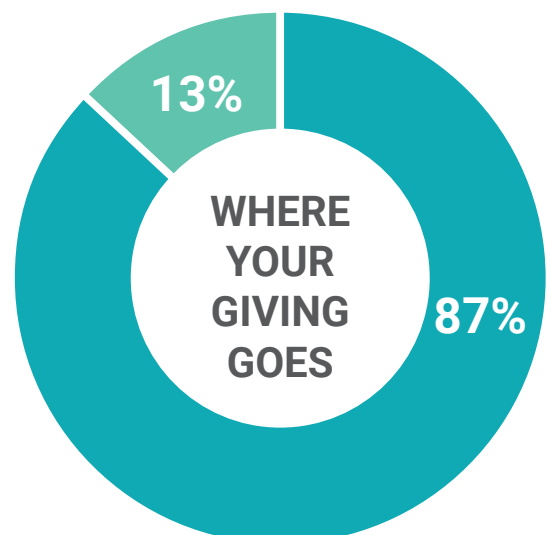


# Financials

Total budget for 2023: \$7.07 million



Programs  
General Management







# The SDGs at The Crossroads: Partnering for the Future



## WPDI and the SDGs: Empowering Communities for Global Change

By proclaiming the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda in 2015, global leaders set the world on a unique and ambitious course to ensure that humanity can gather around a set of common goals to create a better future for every individual. With its 17 goals ranging from poverty to education, gender equality to climate change, this agenda aims to “leave no one behind.” For us at WPDI, this call for action is meant for everyone in every sense. Everyone is entitled to benefit from the SDGs, but it also means that everyone can do their part to help transform the world. There can be no global development without empowered people locally.

This approach is at the core of the strategy developed by Forest Whitaker, who has been designated as SDG Advocate by the Secretary-General of the UN: by enabling members of vulnerable, fragile, and conflict-affected communities, we aim to provide them with resources – skills, grants, etc. – that they can mobilize directly in their environment to improve peace and sustainability. With this integrated bottom-up approach, we have

learned how to respond to the multiple needs of our target communities, heeding the concerns they express. Aiming to foster the overall resilience of our communities and building our projects in line with their expectations, we currently pursue 12 of the SDGs. We strive for all our staff, Youth Peacemakers, volunteers, and beneficiaries to become local partners in the implementation of this global agenda.

Our effort at the 2030 Agenda has includes training Peacemakers to lead advocacy campaigns for the SDGs, ensuring that our work to promote the SDGs can be both global, through the interventions of Mr. Whitaker, and local, through the grassroots initiatives of our youths. Across the years, we have ensured not only that our programs contributed to specific goals but also that our beneficiaries could themselves become an engine to implement the agenda and advocate for it in their communities. We have seen progress towards the SDGs in our locations.

### The SDGs in a Midpoint Crisis: Assessing Progress and Challenges

However, progress is not equal globally. In September 2023, the world reached the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda only to learn that progress towards the SDGs is seriously off track. While some overall successes were achieved from 2015 to 2019, they fell short of the goals. Since 2020, global crises incurred by the COVID-19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine have stalled the global advancement of the SDG progress, especially for targets on quality education, gender

equality, discrimination, and inequality. The United Nations measured that progress on more than 50 percent of targets of the SDGs is weak and insufficient; on 30 percent, it has stalled or gone into reverse. High-income countries have taken measures to mitigate the crises’ impacts, but low-income and lower-middle-income countries face setbacks, exacerbating social issues. Much has been done but even more remains to be accomplished.



Still, achieving the SDGs remains feasible if we rethink and intensify our efforts. More resources are needed, of course, to which the UN has responded by proposing an SDG Stimulus plan as well as reforms in the global financial architecture. Based on the programs that WPDI has been designing and implementing over the past decade, we also believe

that the very way in which SDG action is understood could be rethought. The 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda offer the most universal set of objectives that the global community has set for the world, but most of the challenges they identify have their roots in problems experienced at the local level by everyday people.

## Rethinking Partnerships: Collaborative Strategies for SDG Achievement

People at the grassroots have immense energies that can be channeled using the SDGs as a common language for reaching out to a diversity of partners within and between countries. A key dimension in the work of WPDI is to approach issues in terms of partnerships, which include national and international institutions, civil society organizations, private sector companies, universities, not forgetting individual beneficiaries themselves who should never be seen as mere passive recipients but also as partners on the ground. Open partnerships are key for facing complex challenges in a complex world, a truth that must be heralded in a context of growing threats to peace.

Forest Whitaker's advocacy for the SDGs is therefore deeply rooted in his commitment to peace. Through his missions, he emphasizes that peace is not just the absence of conflict but also the presence of meaningful relations among individuals and communities at the grassroots level. From participating in events like the 'Be Philanthropy 2023' in Brussels to leading field visits to conflict-affected areas like South Sudan, 2023 has been an opportunity for highlighting the interconnectedness of peacebuilding and sustainable development. His engagements with stakeholders, officials, and beneficiaries underscored the importance of dynamic partnerships and grassroots initiatives in achieving the SDGs.

The empowerment of underprivileged communities, particularly youth and women, is also central to Mr.

Whitaker's advocacy efforts. Through initiatives like WPDI's Community Learning Centers and Youth Peacemaker programs, he works to provide access to education, vocational training, and conflict resolution skills. This concern was at the core of his visits to Uganda and Cape Town. Showcasing the transformative impact of these programs on local communities stressed the role of education and empowerment in driving sustainable development. Engaging directly with beneficiaries and officials created a unique opportunity for emphasizing the importance of addressing economic challenges and promoting inclusivity to achieve the SDGs.

As UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, Forest Whitaker recognizes the need to consider the challenges of the present through the lens of their long-term impact on the future. It is, in other words, critical to consider the role of youth in advancing the SDGs and promoting peace worldwide. During his participation in events like the UNESCO Campus Day and the United Nations General Assembly, he emphasized the need for youth participation and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Through platforms like documentary screenings and graduation ceremonies, he shed light on the resilience and determination of young individuals working for peace and sustainable development. Magnifying the capacity of youth for driving change calls for implying them more in our collective effort at achieving the SDGs and building peace that leaves no one behind.







# Conclusion

As we conclude another year of dedicated efforts and meaningful impact, WPDI stands at the intersection of progress and promise, poised to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world while staying true to our core mission of empowering communities for lasting change. Across the diverse spectrum of our activities in peacebuilding, livelihood support, health and wellbeing, and sports, several key themes emerge, reflecting both the challenges we have faced and the opportunities that lie ahead.

In 2023, WPDI encountered numerous challenges, from the lingering effects of poverty and exclusion to the consequences of geopolitical tensions. These challenges have underscored the urgency of our mission and the resilience of the communities we serve. Despite facing adversity, our beneficiaries and partners have demonstrated remarkable determination and resourcefulness, highlighting the essential role of local empowerment in overcoming obstacles and building a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Amidst the challenges, 2023 also brought forth opportunities for growth and innovation. The expansion of our programs and the increasing engagement of beneficiaries reflect a growing recognition of the importance of grassroots empowerment and community-led initiatives in driving positive change. From the scaling up of our vocational training programs to the successful integration of health and wellbeing components

into peacebuilding efforts, WPDI has seized upon opportunities to deepen our impact and reach new heights in our mission.

As the world becomes increasingly volatile and divisive, WPDI's model of peacebuilding at the local level takes on heightened significance. Our experience has shown that peace can indeed be engineered from within communities, even in the face of external challenges and uncertainties. By fostering dialogue, promoting reconciliation, and empowering individuals to become agents of change, we are building resilience at the grassroots level, laying the foundation for a more peaceful and inclusive society.

As we look ahead to the future, WPDI remains committed to our vision of a world where every individual has the opportunity to thrive in a culture of lasting peace and shared prosperity. While the road ahead may be fraught with challenges, we approach it with optimism and determination, guided by the belief that lasting change is possible when communities come together in pursuit of a common goal. With the unwavering support of our partners, donors, and stakeholders, we will continue to innovate, collaborate, and empower communities for a brighter tomorrow.

In closing, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to our journey thus far. Together, we are making a difference, one community at a time, and paving the way for a more peaceful and sustainable world for generations to come.





# WPDI Board of Directors



**Valerie Amos** is a long time campaigner and advocate on human rights, social justice, and equality issues. She is currently Master of University College, Oxford. She is a former Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Co-ordinator at the United Nations. From 2003-2007, she was a member of the British Cabinet as Secretary of State for International Development and then as Leader of the House of Lords and Lord President of the Council. She is involved in a number of charitable and other organisations including the UN Foundation, Mastercard Foundation, Institute for Government and Amos Bursary. *Photography by John Cairns.*

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**Brandon Chapnick** is partner of Chapnick Smukler & Chapnick, has been practicing business management for over 10 years, and has over 20 years in the entertainment business. Brandon's client list includes 20 - 30 entertainers, producers, and executives scattered throughout all disciplines of the entertainment business. These clients have a combined net worth in excess of \$225,000,000.00. Brandon is hands-on in overseeing his client's investments ranging from stocks and bonds; multi-family and commercial real estate; closely held corporations; and more. In addition to his position with the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative, Brandon is a founder and board member of the Scott Lieberman Camp Scholarship Foundation and former board member of The Fulfillment Fund, a Los Angeles-based charity that provides college access to underprivileged students. Brandon lives in Encino, CA, with his wife and two children.

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**Jean-Yves Fillion** is Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of BNP Paribas USA. He serves as executive sponsor to many of the bank's strategic US clients and represents BNP Paribas to the US official sector, US trade organizations and the media. Mr. Fillion has been with BNP Paribas for four decades, 3 of which he has spent in the US between Chicago, Los Angeles and New York. Mr. Fillion has served the bank since 1984 in a succession of executive positions. In addition to his role on the Board of BNPP USA, he is also a Director and member of the Executive Committee of the French American Foundation and the International Advisory Board of Hautes Études Commerciales (HEC). Mr. Fillion is a member of the Board of Governors for the International Tennis Hall of Fame and CityParks Foundation. A former member of the French National Sailing Team, he is an active member of the New York Yacht Club and American Yacht Club. Mr. Fillion is a Chevalier of the National Order of the Legion of Honour. Mr. Fillion received a Master's degree from Dauphine University and his MBA from HEC in Paris. He also studied at the Kellogg School of Management of Northwestern University in Chicago.





# WPDJ Board of Directors



**Frank Cooper** serves as Global Chief Marketing Officer at Visa. In this vital role, Mr. Cooper leads a global team focused on amplifying the company's purpose and advancing Visa's business strategy in the global marketplace. Mr. Cooper's career spans multiple industries, where he has consistently distinguished himself as a business leader driving change and industry-wide transformation through a deep understanding of business, culture and technology. Previously, Mr. Cooper held previous roles as Global CMO at BlackRock, Chief Marketing and Creative Officer at BuzzFeed and CMO of Global Consumer Engagement at PepsiCo. He began his career as an entertainment lawyer and served as a senior executive at two of the world's most iconic music labels: Motown and Def Jam. Mr. Cooper earned a J.D. from Harvard Law School, where he served as the Supreme Court Editor of The Harvard Law Review, and a B.S. degree in business administration from the University of California at Berkeley.

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**Dana Frix** is a lawyer, business advisor and investor, CEO of Frix Advisory Group, and a Managing Director of Utilicom Advisors. Dana has advised WPDJ and been on its board since its founding. Dana is on the board of Savi Technology, a provider of sensor technology and predictive analytics for complex supply chain needs to the U.S. Department of Defense and commercial customers and Common Energy, a U.S. clean energy service and technology provider. Dana is a founding advisor to the World Champions Rodeo Alliance, the premier for-profit U.S. rodeo organization. Until forming the Advisory Group in 2016, Dana was Managing Partner of the Washington, D.C. office of Chadbourne & Parke, a premier U.S. law firm. For several decades, Dana was a partner in Chadbourne's corporate practice and chair of its telecom, media, and technology practice. Before that he was a corporate partner with the law firm of O'Melveny and Myers.

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**Niclas Kjellström-Matseke** is a Swedish-South African business leader with nearly a three-decade career as a CEO and international investor. He has a special focus on sustainable business, engaged in UN's pioneering work with the Sustainable Development Goals, and Board Member of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. He is also the Chairman of Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, and former Advisory Board member of The Elders. Niclas was the CEO of Novamedia Nordics 2005-2015. Novamedia/The Postcode Lottery became the industry's most profitable company. Niclas has nearly two decades of experience investing for social impact, since Novamedia/The Postcode Lottery became the world's 3rd largest private donor, after the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The Wellcome Trust, distributing approx \$11 billion. In 2013, Niclas received the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights - The Ripple of Hope Award for his "dynamic and creative leadership" bringing together the business, political, and civic communities. He was born in 1970 in Sweden and holds an MBA from the Stockholm School of Economics, and a degree in Political science from Uppsala University.

# WPDI Board of Directors



**Elizabeth Roscoe** is a global marketing and sustainability executive with decades of expertise transforming the scope and reputation of corporate foundations through partnerships, advocacy programs, and donor stewardship. She was formerly the head of the Western Union Foundation, a global non-profit that has donated \$140 million connecting migrants and refugees to the global economy through workforce development. Prior to this Elizabeth was the head of marketing for Western Union business solutions, a payments engine moving money for non-profits, governments, small businesses, and educational institutions. Previously, Elizabeth oversaw marketing efforts for American Express, PepsiCo, and Nestle among other well-known brands. She holds a Master's degree from Manchester University.

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**Hans Vestberg** is an industry-leading tech and Fortune 50 Chairman and CEO, Hans Vestberg has served at the helm of Verizon since August 2018 and is the architect of the company's "one network for all" 5G strategy. Prior to joining Verizon, Hans executed the successful transformation of Ericsson from a hardware-focused manufacturer to a software and services company. Hans is a board member at BlackRock, the UN Foundation, and the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative. He is also the founder and Chairman of the The World Economic Forum's EDISON Alliance for digital inclusion, which aims to impact 1 billion lives by delivering affordable, accessible and digital solutions in education, healthcare and financial services by 2025. Born in Hudiksvall, Sweden, Hans earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He is married with two children and is fluent in Swedish, English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

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**Elaine Grunewald** is a global sustainability and development expert and has worked in the private sector for over two decades as a corporate executive, an investor, and a tech founder. Her consistent advocacy for the private sector's role in solving sustainability challenges has played out in multinational as well as startup environments. She is presently the President of Tonomus Venture Studios and Chief Sustainability Officer at Tonomus, the tech and digital arm of NEOM. She is an adviser to numerous start-ups, companies, and CEOs. Formerly, she was SVP and Chief Sustainability and Public Affairs Officer at Ericsson, and a member of the Executive Team. Her public board roles have included the European Sustainable Growth Acquisition Corp., Azelio AB and Sweco AB, and she is an advisor to the Rockton Sustainable Aviation Fund. In 2018 she co-founded the AI Sustainability Center. She has been actively engaged in the World Economic Forum, the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, the Boards Impact Forum, and the International Women's Forum. She co-authored the book "Sustainability Leadership: A Swedish Approach to Transforming Your Company, Your Industry and the World" (Palgrave MacMillan 2020). She holds a double Master's degree from Boston University's Center for Energy and Environmental Studies.





# Our Founder



# Forest Whitaker

Forest Whitaker is the founder and CEO of the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WPDI), through which he provides skills and opportunities to youths and women in regions affected by violence and armed conflict in Mexico, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, the United States as well as Cameroon, Chad and Gabon. Forest Whitaker is also co-founder and chair of the International Institute for Peace, UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, and a member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Advocacy Group. Renowned for his dedication to cultivating children's and youths' artistic talents he had been a member of President Obama's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, working closely with elementary schools to demonstrate the limitless power of the arts to unlock the creative potential of pupils and students.

In addition to his social activism, Whitaker is one of Hollywood's most accomplished and versatile figures. Through his production company, Significant Productions, he aims to support young, talented filmmakers. He believes that film can enlighten people across the globe and can start meaningful dialogues about important subjects. He has produced several award-winning documentaries that touch on a wide range of social issues. He has also received many distinctions for his acting, including the 2007 Academy Award for Best Actor for his portrayal of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in *The Last King of Scotland*, a performance for which he also received a BAFTA Award, SAG Award, and Golden Globe. He also received the Palme d'Or for Best Actor for *Bird* at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival.

























Forest Whitaker's artistic and humanitarian contributions have been widely recognized at home and abroad. In 2007, he received the Cinema for Peace Award for his ongoing advocacy for child soldiers and his work with inner-city youth. In 2013, Boston University's Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center appointed him a Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellow. Over the past few years, he has also received awards honoring his humanitarian work from the Los Angeles Press Club, the Broadcast Film Critics Association, the NAACP, Refugees International, the MLK Health Foundation, the World

Childhood Foundation, the Southern California Mediation Association and more. As an artist and activist committed to promoting peace and social justice, Forest Whitaker has been honored with such recognitions as the Crystal Award at the 2017 edition of the Davos World Economic Forum and the Global Citizen Award from the Atlantic Council in 2022. In recognition of his work serving those affected by conflicts and violence, the French Government appointed him to the Order of Arts and Letters in 2013 as Knight and in 2021 as Commander. In 2022, he was awarded the International Peace Honors PeaceTech Lab for his philanthropy and humanitarian service, alongside the SDG Vanguard Award by the UN Foundation, acknowledging his innovative championing of sustainability and resilience across various countries. Additionally, he was honored, in 2023, with UK's People PostCode Lottery Hero award as well as the 2023 Global Generation Award by the Millennium Campus Network (MCN), underscoring his commitment to advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Forest Whitaker's commitment to peace and social justice has led him to work ever more closely with the United Nations and its diverse agencies. He has addressed such bodies as the Security Council, in 2014 and 2021, and the Human Rights Council, in 2019. His dual career as an artist and activist led him to closely associate with UNESCO, the UN branch for education, science and culture, through which he strives, as UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, to champion values of tolerance, openness and mutual understanding. His commitment to empowering former child soldiers has also led him to actively collaborate, since 2014, with the UN office for Children and Armed Conflict including in the role as an Advocate for Children Affected by War. Forest Whitaker is also member of the Sustainable Development Goals Advocacy Group since its creation by the UN Secretary-General. Membership in this unique platform allows him to disseminate ideals of peace both on the global scene and at the grassroots, in line with his belief that: "Even a seemingly small action can cause ripples that make an enormous impact."



# Our Partners



# Become a Partner

Partnerships ensure WPDI's ability to develop and continue its critical work. This might involve training cohorts of future peacemakers in South Sudan, empowering vulnerable communities in South Africa's Cape Flats, running intercultural dialogues among refugee and host communities in Uganda, helping develop self-sustaining entrepreneurial ventures in Mexico's rural Chiapas state, training women to become entrepreneurs in the suburbs of Paris, France, or teaching conflict resolution in schools in the United States.

Your commitment – large or small – will make a meaningful impact for thousands of people around the world.

## Contact us

### Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative



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# Act for Peace

WPDI is an established 501(c)(3) non-profit entity. Donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Your donation – no matter its size – will ensure our ability to promote youth-led peacebuilding projects and small businesses around the world that will impact thousands of young men and women.



“You have the power to act for peace whether you donate, you convince, you tell a friend, you share our initiative. Make peace grow everywhere we can.”

**Forest Whitaker**



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