



WPDI MEXICO

2023 Annual Report

PEACE IS CONTAGIOUS

www.wpdi.org



Table of Contents

■	Introduction	04
■	Overview of Achievements in 2023	05
	Post-training Questionnaire	06
	Stakeholders Tell us What They Think of WPDI	06
■	Tijuana	08
	Vectors for Change	09
	Mobilizing Youth Leaders to Drive Change at the Grassroots	09
	Improving Local Access to Skills, Knowledge and Connectivity	10
	Peacebuilding as Grassroots Empowerment	11
	Community Dialogues for Sowing Seeds of Peace	11
	Training Community Leaders to Cultivate Peace	13
	Bringing Skills and Values for Peace Into Schools	14
	Training Students and Pupils in Schools	14
	Conflict Resolution Education for Teachers	15
	Conflict Resolution Skills for Everyone in the Community	17
	Promoting Gender Equality	17
	International Peace Day	18
	Fostering Meaningful Engagement with Children	18
	Training Youths in Detention Centers	19
	Opportunities for Socio-Economic Empowerment	20
	Vocational Skills for Personal and Career Development	20
	Business and Entrepreneurship	21
	Information and Communication Technologies	21
	Information and Communication Technologies training for children during school breaks	22
	Arts and Crafts	22
	Supporting Income-Generating Projects	23
	Migrant Women's Livelihood Program	24
	Our Work in Tijuana: Conclusion	26
■	Chiapas	27
	Vectors for Change	28
	Mobilizing Youth Leaders to Drive Change at the Grassroots	28
	Improving Local Access to Skills, Knowledge and Connectivity	29
	Community Learning Center in Mitontic	29
	Events At or Around the Community Learning Center	30
	Promoting Peace through Artistic Expression	31
	Peacebuilding as Grassroots Empowerment	32
	Community Dialogues for Sowing Seeds of Peace	32
	Bringing Skills and Values for Peace Into Schools	35
	Conflict Resolution Education for teachers	36
	Conflict Resolution Skills for Everyone in the Community	37
	Cinema for Peace	38
	Opportunities for Socio-Economic Empowerment	39
	Vocational Skills for Personal and Career Development	39
	Information and Communication Technologies	41
	Information and Communication Technologies for children	41
	Business and Entrepreneurship	42
	Supporting Income-Generating Projects	43
■	General Conclusion	46
■	Partners	47

Introduction

This year, in line with its global strategy, the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WPDI) maintained its efforts to empower youths and women as drivers of change in vulnerable communities across Mexico. Since our first deployment in the country more than a decade ago, we have focused on fostering peace and sustainable development by equipping individuals with the tools and skills needed to become transformative insiders within their communities. This strategy manifests in WPDI's diverse initiatives in Tijuana and Chiapas, where we address pressing challenges through grassroots peacebuilding, Conflict Resolution Education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support.

Promoting a Culture of Peace at the Grassroots

In both Chiapas and Tijuana, the peacebuilding efforts have remained central to our mission of empowering underprivileged youths and women as well members of other groups to become agents of positive change. Through structured dialogues, local leader training, and Conflict Resolution Education at Community Learning Centers (CLCs), WPDI engages diverse stakeholders to address conflict dynamics and promote sustainable peace. In 2023 alone, WPDI conducted nine impactful community dialogues, reaching 691 participants in total. These dialogues serve as vital platforms for reconciliation and empowerment, fostering understanding and resilience within communities.

Moreover, WPDI's Peace Education initiatives in schools equip youth with essential conflict resolution tools, fostering a culture of peace and collective harmony. With programs in 14 schools across Chiapas and Tijuana, WPDI has trained over 1,400 students and teachers in Conflict Resolution Education. Additionally, WPDI leverages awareness activities, such as mobilizing cinema for peace, to reach broader audiences and promote dialogue on peace-related issues. In total, WPDI reached over 750 individuals through cinema screenings and advocacy campaigns in 2023.

Better Livelihoods for Better Lives

In parallel with its peacebuilding efforts, WPDI's livelihood program focuses on economic empowerment through vocational training and entrepreneurship support.

In Chiapas and Tijuana, WPDI offers comprehensive vocational courses in ICT, Entrepreneurship, and Arts and Crafts, benefitting over 1,750 trainees in 2023. Notably, 104 vulnerable women received specialized business training, highlighting WPDI's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Furthermore, WPDI's incubation services to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have continued to play a crucial role in fostering economic resilience within communities.

Dedication, Commitment and Trust

In 2023, WPDI's impact in Mexico continued to exemplify the transformative power of collective action and partnership in fostering sustainable peace and prosperity in challenging environments. Our recognition of the diverse players involved, from dedicated staff to committed youth and beneficiaries, reflects the collaborative spirit essential to achieving significant results in regions marked by adversity. As our beneficiaries become empowered, they emerge as vital partners on the ground, driving positive change within their communities and embodying WPDI's mission to empower the vulnerable. In the face of formidable obstacles, including regional violence and socio-economic challenges, their determination to effect change is inspiring. By empowering individuals with the tools and skills necessary to navigate and transform their realities, WPDI cultivates a sense of agency and hope for a brighter future.

Moreover, the trust placed in WPDI by our funding and strategic partners reflects the efficacy of our approach to empowerment. This trust underscores the belief that vulnerable individuals and fragile communities possess the inherent capacity to shape their destinies and contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous society. By fostering collaboration, resilience, and trust, WPDI remains steadfast in its commitment to building a better future for all, one empowered individual and community at a time.

Overview of Achievements in 2023



292 Youth Peacemakers

31

Lead Youth Peacemakers

261

Local Youth Peacemakers



PEACEBUILDING

- **947 beneficiaries of our peacebuilding programs**
- 181 CRE Trainees
- 360 Participants in Cinema for Peace
- 406 Participants in CLC Advocacy Campaigns

PEACE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

- **1,904 participants in school-based peacebuilding activities**
- 14 Schools hosting WPDI programs
- 1,416 Learners and teachers trained
- 488 People reached through advocacy campaigns in schools

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

- **717 participants in community level peacebuilding activities**
- 9 Community Dialogues held
- 691 Participants in dialogues
- 26 Local leaders trained

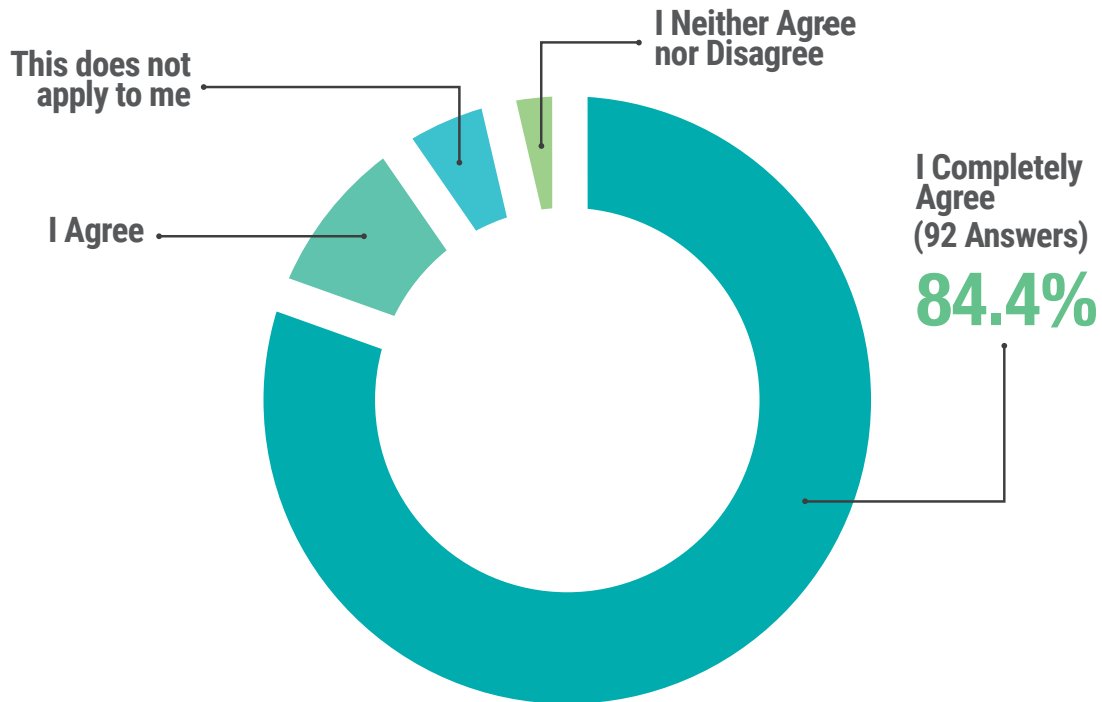


LIVELIHOOD

- **1,764 trainees in vocational courses**
- 951 Information and Communication Technologies
- 415 Entrepreneurship trainees
- 104 Vulnerable women trained in business
- 294 Arts & Craft trainees
- **3,292 beneficiaries of all SMEs**
- 43 SMEs created in 2023
- 63 SMEs supported by WPDI in total
- 463 Jobs created
- 2,829 Indirect beneficiaries of businesses

Post-Training Questionnaire

I have been able to use the knowledge and skills earned from WPDI in my personal and professional life



Stakeholders Tell Us What They Think of WPDI

“

Excellent work to promote youth's resilience and empowerment. Excellent program that promotes the active participation of youth from different regions in Chiapas to enhance their abilities and skills.

”

Carlos Armenta

HIAS International

“

WPDI's position on youth and peace issues is increasingly acknowledged by multiple stakeholders as a high strategic priority in a context of high violence and volatility. We value as highly positive WPDI's ability to enter and adequate methodologies in order to respond to new needs, as well as their ability to adapt their response to the changing context, always keeping in mind both the urgent and the important.

”

Marina Pages

International Service for Peace (SIPAZ)

“

I work at an agency that continuously seeks to help women have a full life, free of violence and with opportunities that allow them to be happy. We traditionally had not worked in the topic of Entrepreneurship before as this agency unfortunately does not have scholarships or any kind of funds available to provide directly to the women, in support of their small businesses, which is why we are always trying to have collaborations with other entities that offer support we unfortunately cannot provide. WPDI has been our ally since October 2021 and it has been truly life changing for the women that come to this Institute, either because we are their only or last resource. Since 2022, we have put together trainings available to all the women of Tijuana at our premises with great success. I have been able to support WPDI's work by promoting their trainings and later, by helping them with their "Bootcamp" competitions. So far, over 10 women have been supported with funds that are not credits or loans, but seed money directly to their bank accounts, so I have been a witness to how much their lives have been able to change thanks to WPDI and their knowledge. 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 is one of the town's with the highest levels of gender based violence against women in the entire country, so efforts like these are rare and must be caught when this ray of light appears. Congratulations WPDI.

”

Perla Angel

Coordinator of Studies and Projects at the Municipal Institute for Women in Tijuana



Tijuana



2023 was a year of many contrasts for WPDI Tijuana. Our overall vision was ambitious and the local team was able to secure new partnerships, expand the program, work with artists and make sure our presence in Tijuana is stronger. We worked with high schools and with secondary schools for the first time this year.

Since 2021, Tijuana has been given a “Gender-Based Violence alert” by the Mexican Secretary of State, more specifically, the Commission to Prevent, Care, Sanction and Eradicate Violence Against Women. This mechanism is unique to Mexico.

It is an emergency protocol that urges the federal, local, and municipal governments to work together to make sure women are safe and proper actions are being conducted so the rates of femicides and violence decrease. Unfortunately, Tijuana continues to be one of the most violent cities in the world. This year, in order to empower women, we implemented the Women’s Livelihood program which supported ten women-led, income-generating projects.

Vectors for Change

Mobilizing Youth Leaders to Drive Change at the Grassroots



Tijuana

25

Youth Peacemakers

15 Lead Youth Peacemakers

10 Local Youth Peacemakers

1,788

Individuals reached by Youth Peacemakers

Despite the challenges posed by our initial need to recruit more Youth Peacemakers and Local Youths, we successfully started implementing the youth leadership program in late 2023 with two groups of students each from high-risk areas. In 2023, we prioritized recruiting socially conscious youths from various organizations, including "Build a Miracle". Once recruited as Lead or Local Peacemakers, they began engaging with the existing cohort of youths.

Trainees see the program's content as valuable tools for their professional growth. Additionally, a refresher training session for our Peacemakers in late 2023 helped them strengthen their skills, providing practical insights for their everyday lives. Now trained, these youths will be an asset to WPDI in the implementation of activities in 2024.



“

Working with WPDI since 2018 has been a really important phase in my professional and personal development. Being an engineer, I often don't have a chance to share any information about personal growth or peace in general. But thanks to my training as a Youth Peacemaker, I have been able to see people in a different light. We all need light, peace and hope, and now I can share what I have learned with other people from my city, and help them be aware of how important we all are!

”

Carlos Lòpez Tiscareño
Peacemaker

“

WPDI has surpassed my expectations. As a psychologist, I am now in charge of sharing what I have learned about peace and its importance to a violence-stricken community. I am now a government official, sharing my time with my role as a Youth Peacemaker. I am an agent for change and I love seeing that moment when ideas in people's heads just click, when they understand peace!

”

Janeth De La Rosa
Peacemaker

Improving Local Access to Skills, Knowledge and Connectivity

The Tijuana Community Learning Center remains strategically positioned amidst one of the most renowned yet crime-ridden neighborhoods, Camino Verde, where our presence has been steadfast since our inception in 2013. Situated within an industrial sector of Tijuana, the center offers easy access to beneficiaries via public transportation. While serving as our main platform for developing and implementing local programs, notably for training sessions, the center has continued to operate as a safe space welcoming everyone. In this light, we have observed how family members of CLC trainees utilize our "reading corner" area while awaiting their loved ones. Our trainees are often going through financial hardship and problems related to lack of security and violence as well as many issues related to mental health and depression, but still, their consistency and eagerness to participate in activities are proof that the model corresponds to their expectations and capacity. It should also be mentioned that most groups have a "potluck" activity when they have their graduations, which they fund themselves, showing the sense of community and teamwork which are two key ingredients to make the local CLC a vibrant hub of change and support.



Peacebuilding as Grassroots Empowerment

Community Dialogues for Sowing Seeds of Peace



Tijuana

6

Community Dialogues held

236 Participants in dialogues

26 Local leaders trained

Participants in community level
Peacebuilding

262

Community dialogues, integral to our organization's mission, serve as platforms for fostering understanding, collaboration, and actionable solutions within communities. These dialogues are structured engagements that bring together diverse stakeholders

to discuss pertinent issues, share perspectives, and formulate strategies for positive change. In 2023, we successfully conducted six dialogues.





Case Study

Empowering Women Through Community Dialogues



On November 25th, commemorating the "International Awareness Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women," our Program Coordinator served as a keynote speaker at the COLEF-Colegio de la Frontera Norte community dialogue. Addressing how our organization focuses its efforts on supporting vulnerable women and survivors of violence, the dialogue attracted 150 participants, both online and in-person. This event, hosted by COLEF, a renowned higher education institution in Northwest Mexico, provided a crucial platform for discussing strategies to address Gender-Based Violence and empower women in the community.

Resolutions Agreed On

Participants all agreed on the importance of leveraging financial independence as a tool to combat the prevalent Gender-Based Violence in the region. Special attention was given to the opportunities available for local businesses through WPDI's Women's Livelihood Program in Tijuana.

The community dialogue served as a catalyst for collaboration and action, inspiring stakeholders to collectively address the pressing issue of gender-based violence. By leveraging resources, knowledge, and partnerships, the initiative strives to create a safer and more equitable environment for women in the region, exemplifying the potential for grassroots efforts to drive positive change.

Stakeholder Testimonials

"The GBV alert that is currently in place for Tijuana and the rest of Baja California shows us what the government must do to decrease levels of violence. However, it is the networks of peace that are the most important. The power of community cannot be compared to any other tool, there is no limit to what female solidarity can achieve. We must all participate in supporting people who need it most, our neighbors, our friends, our family... Everyone can be a victim of violence. I am amazed at what organizations like WPDI have accomplished, it is efforts like those that the state government promotes."

Karla Pedrin

Director of the State Institute for Women of Baja California

"This dialogue organized by WPDI is especially important in celebration of "Orange Day" because the safety of women is and should be top priority in a state like Baja California. Tijuana is always among the top five most violent cities in the country, third place in femicides, this data must be a wakeup call. All community efforts done by non-profit organizations must be supported, the government itself cannot possibly do all the work. When women work together, nothing can stop them, that is why a group of women, myself included, did the study and requested this "Alert" to the State's Human Rights Commission in 2020, which was accepted and officially was established in 2021 for all of Baja California. Non-profit organizations like the one I belong to are the ones that are leading change, and we must take advantage of the "international eyes" that are upon us with the help of international organizations."

Dr. Marlene Solis

Member of COLEF

Training Community Leaders to Cultivate Peace

In addition to hosting community dialogues, WPDI is committed to delivering Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) training to empower community leaders. Recognizing the pivotal role these leaders play in fostering sustainable peace, the trainings are strategically conducted following community dialogues to ensure that the momentum towards peace is maintained in the long-term.

In 2023, our local team conducted an online CRE trainings for 26 leaders who shared insights into their ongoing projects and contributions to peace within their communities from various states of Mexico, ensuring an impact beyond the borders of Tijuana.

Participants included professionals engaged in initiatives supporting underprivileged children, literacy programs, environmental awareness campaigns, among others.

They successfully completed the program, demonstrating a commitment to the content and approach of the training. Remarkably, many had not previously received formal training in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, underscoring the importance of ongoing support and follow-up in the coming year. As we reflect on the achievements of 2023, empowering community leaders with peacebuilding skills and knowledge is paramount to fostering a culture of peace that transcends geographical boundaries and positively impacts the lives of countless individuals and communities. Moving forward, our commitment to providing continued support and follow-up will be instrumental in sustaining this transformative momentum.

“

Everything was perfect. The contents were very well structured, which allowed me to understand everything and build notions from scratch. They provided us with a variety of tools to be able to develop peace not only at work, but also to apply them personally.

”

Salvador Alberto Mayoral

Member of the MERITED non-profit organization that promotes education as a tool for community growth

“

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

Member of the MERITED non-profit organization that promotes education as a tool for community growth



Bringing Skills and Values for Peace Into Schools



Tijuana

4

Schools hosting
WPDI programs

653

Learners and
Teachers Trained

350

People Reached
through advocacy
campaigns in schools

1,003

Total
Participants
in school-based
peacebuilding

Training students and pupils in schools

Despite ongoing challenges such as academic disruptions in schools, we were able to fully implement our training program, thanks, in part, to collaborations with local stakeholders and alliances forged in previous years with the Ministry of Education at both state and municipal levels. This helped us ensure that we were effectively serving the areas of Tijuana identified as "most vulnerable" by municipal authorities. This year marked the expansion of our program into Secondary and High Schools, in addition to our past experience in Primary Schools. At the primary level, we operated in two schools, both identified as crucial areas for providing additional activities to children in need.



“

This program has helped me know that I can practice meditation to calm my emotions, and it also taught me how to help solve conflicts at my school and with my family.

”

Carlos Gonzalez

Pupil from Felipe El Pescador Elementary School



“

To me, peace is when you are relaxed, in a place with no noise, without my worries.

”

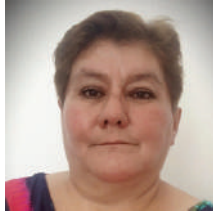
Amairani Santos

Pupil from Felipe El Pescador Elementary School

Conflict Resolution Education for Teachers

In addition to bringing training activities directly to schools, WPDI delivered a virtual training specifically designed for teachers, 15 of which took the training this year. Being a city that unfortunately occupies the top positions in terms of bullying rates all over Mexico,

we focused on conducting practical exercises that helped improve the relationships between students, making sure every student felt included.



“

This peacebuilding and conflict resolution program has taught me to better understand my way of working in the school classroom and complement it in my daily life and in this way apply it with the students as well as share this experience with my coworkers. All the classes were explained in an easy and understandable way, the content material about each topic was very good and I shared them with my family, excellent work.

”

Claudia Irasema Alarcón Róman

Teacher from the Colegio Aleman Cuauhtemoc Hank high school



“

Bringing to the table personal situations that I have experienced and seeing the way in which conflicts are resolved or could have been resolved with the strategies provided through this course, has allowed me to put into practice what I have learned and expand knowledge.

”

Rosa Isela Fonseca

Teacher from the Colegio Aleman Cuauhtemoc Hank high school





Case Study

Transforming Communities Through Conflict Resolution Education Jointly Delivered to Students and Parents

School Name: Escuela Secundaria 59
Location: Otay neighborhood, Tijuana

Context: Escuela Secundaria 59 grappled with significant challenges, including high levels of school bullying and growing concerns stemming from incidents in other secondary schools where students brought firearms onto school premises. Additionally, there was a notable lack of parent participation, prompting the school principal to seek proactive measures to address these pressing issues.



Description of the Ongoing Issue

Amidst a backdrop of heightened tensions and security concerns in Tijuana's secondary schools in 2023, Escuela Secundaria 59 faced its own set of challenges. While no specific incidents of firearm possession were reported at the school, the principal expressed deep concern over the lack of parental involvement and engagement. In response, WPDI took action during the second semester, organizing a targeted training initiative aimed at parents, particularly those whose children were participating in Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) classes.

Steps Taken to Address the Issue

Recognizing the importance of fostering collaboration between parents and students, WPDI organized simultaneous training sessions for both groups. This innovative approach provided an opportunity for parents and children to share experiences, discuss learnings from the CRE curriculum, and explore strategies for promoting peace within the school community. Remarkably, the training initiative culminated in 90 parents becoming certified trainers themselves, signifying a significant shift towards proactive engagement and empowerment within the school community.

Testimonials

"Equipped with newfound knowledge and skills as a peacemaker, I am committed to applying these principles in my daily interactions within my family and beyond. I am eager to become more involved in the school community, leveraging my efforts to make a meaningful contribution."

Irene Diaz
Member of COLEF

"This program has reinforced my belief that conflicts can be resolved without resorting to violence. It is a reminder that fostering a culture of peace requires collective action. By each of us doing our part, we can create a better world."

Jorge Mendez
Student

Conclusion

The success of the Conflict Resolution Education classes at Escuela Secundaria 59 underscores the transformative potential of empowering parents and students with essential conflict resolution skills. By fostering collaboration, dialogue, and a shared commitment to peacebuilding, WPDI's initiative has not only addressed immediate challenges but has also laid the groundwork for a more harmonious and resilient school community.

Conflict Resolution Skills for Everyone in the Community



Tijuana

101

Conflict Resolution Education trainees

This year, WPDI had the privilege of participating in several noteworthy events. WPDI remains committed to promoting peaceful and inclusive communities, empowering youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate challenges and contribute positively to society.

Promoting Gender Equality

The team was notably invited by the Municipal Institute for Women and the Municipal Government of Tijuana to take part in two "Orange Rallies for Girls, Boys, and Youth," focused on promoting conflict resolution and non-violence against women.

During the first rally in June, we had the opportunity to engage with 200 children from the "Camino Verde" community, which is among the five most vulnerable areas in Tijuana due to its high levels of violence. This event took place at the city's largest park, "Parque Morelos," where participants immersed themselves in a series of six interactive modules led by various organizations, including the Municipal Institute for Women and the Municipal Institute against Addictions and Crime Prevention. Through these modules, youth gained insights into digital violence, learned about their rights, and acquired key concepts to identify and reject violence.

In commemoration of International "Orange Day" on November 25th, our team joined forces with CONALEP II school to host a second rally, this time focusing on digital violence. Eddy Villanueva, an expert from the "Cyber Police," conducted a workshop with 100 students, followed by a series of four engaging activities.



International Peace Day

During the International Peace Day 2023, our Conflict Resolution Education trainer, led a meditation session at the beach, preceded by a "Community Dialogue" with 40 participants, including both her trainees and citizens from the "Playas de Tijuana" area.

The activity allowed for participants to engage in a concrete experience of cultivating inner peace as a path to peace with others.

Fostering Meaningful Engagement with Children

During the summer, WPDI participated in the "Children's Summer camp" conducted by the State Human Rights Commission in which our trainer worked with 30 children on different meditation and breathing exercises and introduced them to basic concepts

of fostering peace. These children came from the most vulnerable areas in the city, especially from those with the highest level of family violence.



Training Youths in Detention Centers



This year, WPDI continued its efforts to address the root causes of conflict by providing training in detention centers for youth. Recognizing the heightened vulnerability of young individuals who engage in criminal activity due to a multitude of unmet needs and limited opportunities, we conducted a series of training sessions at the request of these facilities for the third consecutive year. The objective of our training program within these detention centers is to enhance communication channels and knowledge dissemination, and to provide timely information and tools for deepening peacebuilding efforts and conflict resolution skills. Additionally, our program aims to support staff performance improvement and prevent human rights violations within these facilities.

Through these initiatives, we are committed to empowering young individuals in detention centers with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate conflict situations constructively, ultimately contributing to a safer and more peaceful environment for all involved.

“

I learned about WPDI through people I know at the center and I am happy to learn that I have more options than I knew before. I understand that the time I spend here should be important, and I should not waste it. Conflict is something I must work on.

”

Graduate of the CRE program for

Detained Youths in Tijuana, Mexico 2023

“

I am no stranger to WPDI, so I am happy that they did keep their promise and they came back to see us. I am grateful to be actually learning something different, something for my inner self.

”

Graduate of the CRE program for

Detained Youths in Tijuana, Mexico 2023



Opportunities for Socio-Economic Empowerment

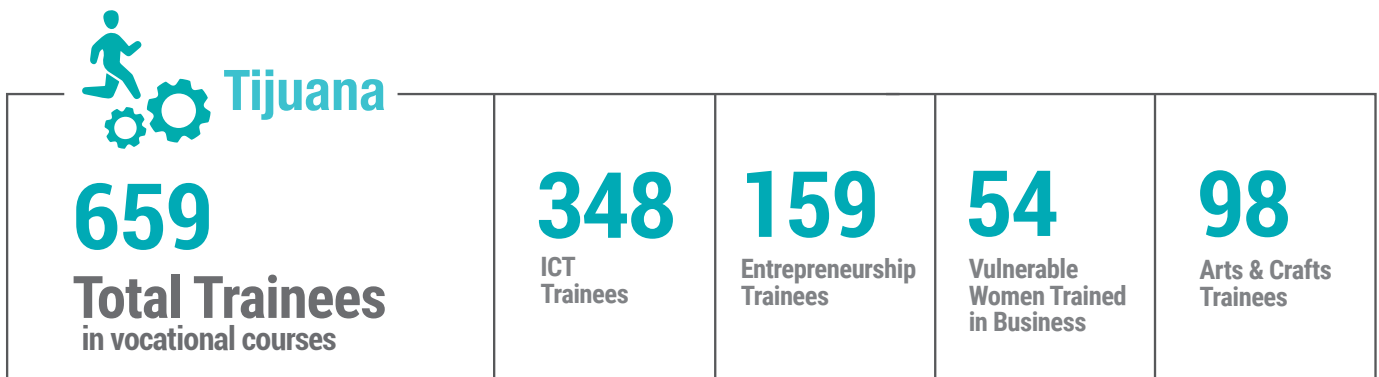
Our program encompasses vocational training, cooperative business development, and SME-funding and support opportunities, enabling participants to enhance their career prospects and realize their entrepreneurial dreams.

Moreover, successful graduates gain access to business plan competitions, where promising ideas are selected for further incubation.

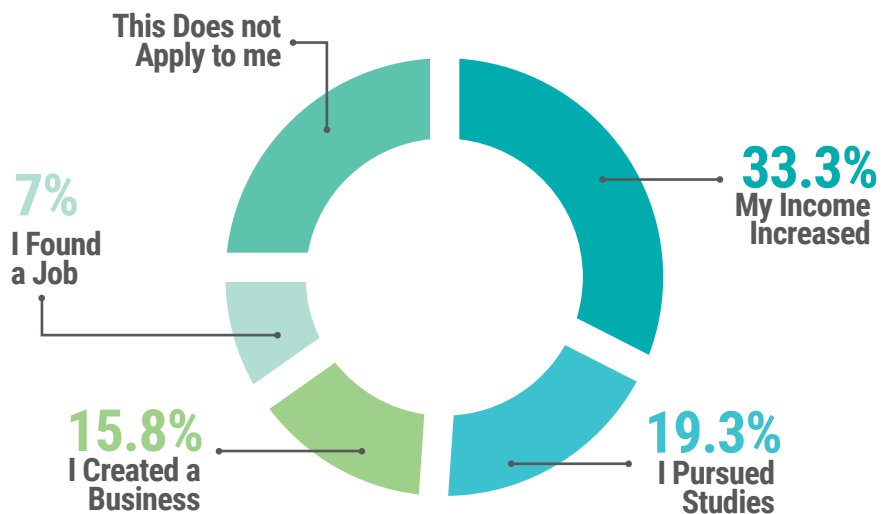
Vocational Skills for Personal and Career Development

Vocational courses have remained a popular offering at the CLC, with more than 650 trainees participating in one of the courses proposed in ICT, Entrepreneurship and Arts & Crafts. The appeal of the courses can be linked to the outcomes experienced by trainees in terms of career development and increased employability. This was demonstrated in the feedback surveys that we circulated among trainees six months after course completion. In 2023, 57 former vocational trainees in Tijuana responded to our survey on the career outcomes of their training.

56% reported experiencing positive economic outcomes. The same survey also revealed that, among the 57 respondents, 10 of them who had a history of unemployment reported positive career outcomes with 6 stating 'I found a job' and 2 stating 'My income increased'.



Has the program improved your career prospects? (57 responses)



Business and Entrepreneurship

The Business and Entrepreneurship training program, conducted at our Community Learning Center, fosters economic empowerment and opportunity. With sessions typically spanning three months and offered free of charge, our program attracts participants from diverse backgrounds and ages across the city. Through an open registration process facilitated by Google Forms, we ensure inclusivity and accessibility, tailoring training schedules to meet the preferences of our trainees. Our post-training surveys with graduates reveal tangible outcomes, including increased income, career advancement, pursuit of further education, and successful business launches. Moreover, our graduates have the opportunity to participate in our business bootcamp, where they receive guidance in developing robust business plans and compete for funding and support.

Beyond the skills acquired during the course, the in-person training is a place where trainees build a robust support network together. WPDI also provides assistance to migrant trainees seeking guidance on paperwork, translation, and job placement.

“

I have always enjoyed baking healthy cookies and vegan snacks. I learned about the courses with WPDI through social media. In my training group where I met other older women who did not have any experience in selling or promoting their products either. Yet, with the help and motivation of peers, I am elaborating a business plan to formalize the sale of my baked goods.

”

Olga Matías

A trainee who specializes in healthy, baked goods. In addition to training, WPDI helped her find events and other activities where she has been able to display her products.

Information and Communication Technologies

Our ICT training remained highly sought-after in Tijuana, reflecting the significant local demand for computer literacy skills. WPDI has established itself as a leading institution in this field. Our training remains cost-free and accessible for everyone. The trainer conducts an online registration process through posts on social media platforms, while also accommodating individuals who visit our CLC and express specific training needs. Our course offerings this year aligned closely with community requests, encompassing:

- ICT: Basic, Intermediate and Advanced levels
- Excel: Basic, Intermediate and Advanced levels
- Programming and gaming workshops for children

The trainer diligently updates WPDI's curriculum to incorporate real-life situations and examples, ensuring trainees can readily apply their newfound skills. Trainees see tangible benefits, including improved job prospects, academic advancement, and increased confidence in computer usage beyond mobile devices.

“

I started taking the computer course because my mother knew someone who had taken it, and I was very excited because I had learned many things about computers. We take classes in a very comfortable place, we all have access to a computer. Professor Jorge Pazos is a very good instructor, he teaches us many things with a lot of dedication and patience. The course has been very useful to me. I will soon start working and apply several of the things that I have learned.

”

Angelo De Jesus Medina Urbina



Information and Communication Technologies Training for Children During School Breaks

A Total of 99 Children Received ICT Training

WPDI offers ICT training to underprivileged children in Tijuana to equip them with essential digital skills and thrive in today's interconnected world. Given the popularity of the program, we have increased our offering of ICT courses for children and delivered three intensive courses during the holiday breaks. The parents registered their children and stayed at the CLC during these sessions.

“

I remember that during my holiday I went to a summer camp called WPDI where they taught us how to use a program for games. I felt free to develop my own ideas. They invited us to create some 3D figurines. I felt great being there, so I highly recommend it!

”

Juliette

“

I am going to tell you about my experience at the summer camp when I went because my mommy invited me. I liked it, I had fun, and I would do it again. At the beginning, we introduced ourselves and they taught us how to use the digital pen. I also remember they taught us about a program to develop games.

”

Jocelyn

Arts and Crafts

WPDI 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.



Supporting Income-Generating Projects

Amidst the challenges faced by Tijuana, our Business Incubation program has demonstrated significant progress in fostering entrepreneurship and economic growth. In 2023, the number of active businesses supported soared to 22, compared to 6 in 2022. Particularly noteworthy is the remarkable increase in service-oriented

businesses, from 5 to 17, indicating a growing entrepreneurial spirit and a diversification of economic activities. This positive trend bodes well for the communities of Tijuana, signaling enhanced opportunities for employment and economic stability.



SMEs* created in 2023 **16**

SMEs supported by WPDI in total **22**

SMEs created by migrant women in 2023 **10**

Jobs Created **58**

Indirect beneficiaries of businesses (families) **450**

Beneficiaries of all SMEs 508

To identify the businesses that we are going to support for at least one year, the first step is to carry out a rigorous and transparent selection process that we conduct in collaboration with local organizations and personalities who have a good understanding of local market realities. This approach ensures that the WPDI-supported businesses have a high potential for profit and that they are reputed as an expression of talent and work, not favoritism. During the year, our local program orchestrated four impactful business bootcamp competitions, each representing a significant stride in empowering migrant women and business graduates alike. The inaugural competition, held on October 3rd, catered to graduates of the Business and Entrepreneurship training, drawing a commendable turnout, particularly among women participants.

These aspiring entrepreneurs diligently crafted business proposals and honed their presentation skills for the event, hosted at the Municipal Institute of Art and Culture. A distinguished panel, comprising representatives from WPDI, the Municipal Ministry of Economic Development, local educators, entrepreneurs, and the esteemed Leticia Abegail, artist and activist, selected three standout projects from the pool of 17 candidates. Similarly, the second bootcamp for graduates witnessed participation from 16 candidates, with three deserving winners now benefiting from ongoing support. This support includes access to dedicated WhatsApp groups staffed by WPDI experts for queries, assistance with government paperwork, and continual feedback to nurture their entrepreneurial ventures.

*SMEs = Small and medium-sized enterprises

Migrant Women's Livelihood Program

2023 has marked a turning point for our entrepreneurship program in Tijuana as we launched our local deployment of our Women's Livelihood Program that we had piloted in Africa with refugee women. In line with our prioritizing the empowerment of women in our ten-year strategy, we decided that it was critical to bring the Women Livelihood Program into Tijuana, where women are highly challenged as the high-crime context strengthens the traditional obstacles that women face in their personal and professional development. This is especially true of migrant women, a group that has grown recently in Tijuana. This is to say that the business incubation program in Tijuana created unique opportunities for the highly motivated individuals who joined us for its first session. As the program was implemented in collaboration with local stakeholders, the reception at the community level was overwhelmingly positive, underscoring its potential to create lasting impact and send ripples of empowerment through communities.

We launched a specialized "Migrant Women" business bootcamp on October 17th at the Bit Center, attracting considerable interest. The outreach to beneficiaries of the training focused on five key areas of the city which are the ones with the highest rate of violence, especially against women. We worked with women from:

- Zona Centro
- Natura
- Urbi Villa del Prado
- Villas del Campo
- Camino Verde

The momentum persisted into December with our second migrant women business bootcamp competition on the 29th, where projects were showcased before a panel of expert judges at the Municipal Institute of Art and Culture of Tijuana. These competitions underscored the resilience of migrant women entrepreneurs, with 17 participants in the first bootcamp and 14 in the second one. In addition to funding, the ten deserving winners of these competitions are currently benefiting from comprehensive business coaching and immigration guidance, facilitating their seamless integration into the vibrant entrepreneurial landscape of Tijuana.

Women Beneficiaries and their businesses

Viviane Petit - Food from Haiti

Sirley Banesa Arroyave - Colombian Chorizos

Patricia Pastora Pombo - Balance " Enseñar es un arte" school of arts

María de las Mercedes Izàbal - Juankies pastries and desserts

María Del Rosario Espinoza - Adams sewing service

María Luisa Mujica Vivanco - "Farm Dogs" clothing for pets

María Del Rosario Castro - "Mujer bonita" handmade sandals

Juana Guevara Gonzalez - Tamales Doña Juanita

Elisa Abigail Favela Aguilar - Wellness Spa

Juana Flores - Geriatric center with focus on mental stimulation

“

I have been selling my tamales for many years now with the help of my son. It is us against the world in this city that has given us so much. There was no stable work in the south of Mexico and we really struggled. My husband could not find work when my son was little and that is why we had to look for solutions. Thank you for this prize, I will be happy to keep up with my work with WPDI!

”

Juana Guevara Gonzalez

Tamales Doña Juanita

“

Thank you WPDI. I used to sell my chorizos back home (Colombia) but was too scared to do that here as the chorizo people have in Mexico is quite different, but I have found a south american community who embraces cuisine close to their hearts. I am able to make my living off of this and now, with this incentive, I will be able to pay for marketing and my own place to make them. Thank you!

”

Sirley Banesa Arroyave

Colombian Chorizos



Case Study: Viviane Petit

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

Background

Viviane Petit is a resilient single mother from Haiti, navigating life in Tijuana amidst numerous challenges, including language barriers, safety concerns, and limited access to resources.

Discovery of the Program

Viviane learned about the Business Bootcamp program through UNHCR and COMAR, the Mexican Commission of Help for Refugees, which provided her with a glimmer of hope for a better future.

Motivation to Join

Intrigued by the prospect of acquiring new skills and finding a supportive community, Viviane was drawn to the program. Despite her immigrant status and initial hesitations, she recognized the potential to transform her passion for cooking into a sustainable business venture.

Challenges Faced

In her community, Viviane encountered significant obstacles, including limited educational opportunities, pervasive gang-related violence, and limited government support for aspiring entrepreneurs like herself.

WPDI's Support

The WPDI program provided a lifeline for Viviane, offering training in Business and Entrepreneurship without requiring immigration status. Overcoming the language barrier, the program provided free training and instilled a sense of belonging within a global community, fostering a supportive environment for Viviane to thrive.

Testimonial from Viviane Petit

"When COMAR and UNHCR told me about this program, I did not think it would be the opportunity for me. I am not fluent in Spanish, although I do speak the language. I do not have a Mexican passport or pay taxes yet, so my 'empanadas' and pastries had not had much luck, despite how much people like them. Once I was told that the training was free, I decided to dare to dream. I am now a winner! My trainer was so nice, so sweet and patient. I feel like I made the right decision coming to Tijuana. This town is a wonderful place and now that I have set foot here, I know Tijuana is the place for me!"

Conclusion

Viviane's journey exemplifies the transformative impact of WPDI's Business Bootcamp program on empowering women entrepreneurs from marginalized communities. Through accessible training, financial support, and a supportive network, WPDI is not only equipping women like Viviane with the tools for economic independence but also fostering a sense of hope and belonging in their adopted communities.



Our work in Tijuana: Conclusion



Amidst challenges such as the urgency to tackle Gender-Based Violence (GBV), there were remarkable successes. Securing the support of artist Lety Abegail, expanding our reach to new schools and communities, and increasing funding opportunities for business graduates, particularly women, underscored our impact and relevance in the city. As we reflect on the year, we recognize the importance of community dialogues and large-scale activities in fostering peace and understanding.

Looking ahead to 2024, we are committed to embracing new projects, such as Arts and Crafts training. The successes of 2023, marked by the positive impact on hundreds of individuals and the growing trust and recognition from the community, inspire us to continue.

Chiapas

2023 was a challenging year for the Chiapas Office. The violence initiated during the 2021 local election has grown steadily and conflicts have become increasingly complex. In many cities and rural communities, organized crime has permeated the social and political structures, impacting locals' everyday life. Under these circumstances, WPDI's work in the region has become more important than ever. Thanks to the presence of our experienced Youth Peacemakers in almost every region of the state, the Chiapas Office has been able to keep up with its peace work and continue

to expand to other states of southern Mexico such as Yucatán and Campeche, even under these conditions. This year, the office was able to train more than 250 local youth and over 400 students. We are also currently supporting 31 businesses throughout the state. WPDI is highly recognized in the state as a peace and conflict resolution expert, and the demand for Conflict Resolution Education, ICT and Business training keeps growing.



Vectors for Change

Mobilizing Youth Leaders to Drive Change at the Grassroots



Chiapas

267
Youth Peacemakers

16 Lead Youth Peacemakers

251 Local Youth Peacemakers

912 Individuals reached by Lead Peacemakers

Violent conflicts directly impacted at least four municipalities, putting the lives of seven of our peacemakers at risk. Our Chiapas Office staff closely monitored the wellbeing of these individuals and their families, providing necessary emotional support to help them navigate through these challenging times. 16 Youth Peacemakers were actively engaged in delivering activities this year. They maintained their efforts, continuing to advance their businesses, mentor local youths, deliver Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) in schools, and undertake various peace and human rights projects.

The impact of their work is evident in the appreciation expressed by families within their communities, who commend the Youth Peacemakers for their unwavering commitment. Furthermore, five peacemakers have actively engaged in traditional local government forums, contributing to broader community initiatives.



Now that I'm a trainer I can see how this program has a deep impact on children and young people. As it was for me, it's an opportunity for them to reflect on their own life, their families and communities, as well as the many ways in which violence has affected them. Training others also has given me the opportunity to better understand the current situation of my community and contribute in some way to prevent violence in the jungle region.



Lielman Hernández
Peacemaker



Speaking my native language with pride has allowed me to transform local conflicts in creative ways. The community and territorial conflicts in the highlands (of Chiapas) are always very complex and the youth with whom I have worked are trying to understand where all this violence comes from. WPDI training has also allowed us, Youth Peacemakers, to be bridges in our communities. I believe that our presence and work has allowed us to build safe spaces of peace for the people we work with. I also believe that being a peacemaker pushes us beyond our responsibility, it leads us to rethink our own culture and our own identity, we can acquire new peace tools and share them with our communities. I think this is also very important.



Silvia Sántiz
Peacemaker

Improving Local Access to Skills, Knowledge and Connectivity

Community Learning Center in Chiapas

The Chiapas Community Learning Center is in San Cristóbal de Las Casas city, the administrative and cultural center of the highlands. Five staff members operate the CLC and in 2023, it offered diverse services for nearly 1,000 visitors. Throughout the year, 18 events were held at and around the Chiapas CLC. Since WPDI is highly recognized as a peace and conflict resolution expert, many of these events were requested or organized with our local, national, and international partners. Our partners include NGOs but also universities, local government, community leaders, cultural centers, and youth-led collectives.

It not only provided a safe learning space for nearly one thousand visitors, but also worked as a bridge where public and private stakeholders met with youths and shared common visions for their community. The meetings held at the CLC with our staff, leaders of the North Zone of the City, other NGOs and collectives and state's government officials is the perfect example of WPDI's role as a facilitator and connector under the umbrella of promoting peace and empowered communities.

Community Learning Center in Mitontic

The Mitontic CLC had a great year and continued growing despite the notable rise in political and electoral problems throughout the municipality. It must be noted that the ongoing support from the administration and teachers of COBACH 137, the high school which let our Youth Peacemakers establish the Mitontic CLC within the school's premises and has ensured a safe space despite the violent conflict in the municipality. During the year the Mitontic CLC impacted over 1,000 beneficiaries through a total of 59 training sessions and events aimed to empower local youth through the acquisition of new skills and the enhancement of existing ones. The primary training topics included: Leadership and Conflict Resolution Education, Business and Entrepreneurship, ICT, and Arts and Crafts.

This approach will allow community members to prioritize shared values such as identity and belonging, empowering them to effectively address pressing issues such as the municipality's water scarcity.

Along with the launch of the special program, five events were organized at the CLC in order to foster peace and promote constructive relationships through sports, dialogues among peers and local celebrations. As a result of the youth entrepreneurship training, a total of 11 income-generating projects were awarded with seed funding.

Given the current political and security challenges present at the municipality, the local staff demonstrated commended dedication in tailoring activities addressing the pressing needs of the community. Consequently they created a special program entitled "Language Preservation through Participatory Action Research" which aims to promote community cohesion and solidarity through a curriculum based on cultural and youth identity, biocultural heritage as well as peers and intergenerational dialogue. Throughout 2024, this initiative will contribute to consolidate the Center as a neutral and safe environment for community members, especially the younger generations. Solidarity and common wellbeing will be promoted by channeling collective efforts towards resolving local challenges through the integration of ancestral biocultural knowledge and contemporary agricultural practices.



Events At Or Around the Community Learning Center



Chiapas

370

Participants in Advocacy Campaigns at the CLC

In the year 2023, WPDI's initiatives in and around Chiapas' CLC (Community Learning Center) saw a vibrant array of events aimed at fostering violence prevention and local development. These events, totaling 18 in number, attracted a participation of 370 individuals. Notably, our work garnered significant recognition from various partners and local institutions, leading to collaborations aimed at enhancing violence prevention efforts and bolstering community development initiatives.

Here's an overview of the events held throughout the year:

■ Violence Prevention and Trauma Response:

January: Violence prevention session in partnership with Chieltik.

January: Self-care and trauma prevention workshop facilitated by partner HIAS International.

February: Emotional crisis first response training conducted in collaboration with HIAS International

■ Youth Empowerment and Leadership:

March: Hip-Hop Week

March: Presentation on the role of youth in peacebuilding for Plataforma por la Paz en México by our Program Coordinator.

July: Youth leadership workshop in collaboration with ally Ser Joven.

July: Introduction session for peacemakers in collaboration with ally Peace First.

■ Education and Skill-Building:

May: Participation in Feria Ambiental BOJO alongside local ally NaBolom; presentation by Business Trainer on Local Development and Social Businesses.

June: Talk on social responsibility in business delivered by our Business Trainer in partnership with Universidad del Bienestar Benito Juarez (UBBJ).

August - December : Exam preparation session for Instituto Chiapaneco de Educación para Jóvenes y Adultos (ICHEJA).

■ Gender-Based Violence Prevention:

July: Gender-Based Violence prevention session conducted with partner Chieltik.

■ Community Engagement and Collaboration:

September: Peace organizations meeting hosted with partner CORECO and Inter-American Foundation.

September: Participation in Misión Resistencia Peace Projects Competition and Gala at Mérida alongside partner Jornada de Derechos Humanos.

October: Entrepreneurship fair held at Centro Cultural el Carmen during the visit of our Executive Director.

November: Attendance at the GPPAC North America yearly meeting.



Promoting Peace through Artistic Expression

98 Participants Registered for Arts and Crafts workshops

The trainees include the children participating in our special summer courses. Breakdance workshops were delivered by partner Patrulla Roja during the complete year.

“

My motivation to register for the breakdance workshop was dance, I am only 7 years old but dance is my passion. It has taught me discipline, it has changed the way I think, now I'm more open and I'm not afraid of dancing in public. I really like to breakdancing at this Center because here I feel safe. Recently I was able to travel to Tuxtla for the first time because of breakdancing.

”

Daniel de Jesús Hernández Gómez

Trainee

During the workshops, children learn basic breakdance moves and rules, as well as rhymes and beats. They also learn about hip hop and breakdance culture.

Algebra courses were also delivered to the children, by a local volunteer and participants learned basic arithmetic operations using numbers and letters. Painting and local crafts workshop was delivered in the North zone of San Cristóbal where children learned basic painting skills such as creativity, inspiration, color and perspective.

“

I learned this algebra workshop through Facebook. I was motivated to register because currently I'm a second grade secondary school student. I really liked this workshop because I learned a new way to understand math. I really like learning new stuff so I would like WPDI to offer more basic workshops that can support my formal education and help me be a better student.

”

Naomi Itzel Ruíz

Trainee



Peacebuilding as Grassroots Empowerment

Community Dialogues for Sowing Seeds of Peace

Community dialogues serve as invaluable platforms for constructive interaction, especially in regions like Chiapas, where the legacy of the unresolved armed conflict of 1994 continues to linger. Recognizing the importance of fostering dialogue amidst prevailing conflict and violence, the Chiapas Office of WPDI has adopted a diversified approach to conducting community dialogues, adhering to the "Do No Harm" principle. This year, we conducted three community dialogues. They have served as catalysts for meaningful conversations, reconciliation, and empowerment, contributing to the collective efforts towards building sustainable peace in conflict-affected regions.



Chiapas

3
Community
Dialogues held

Participants
in dialogues
455

More on the community dialogues organized:

Universidad de la Península, Mérida, Yucatán (January): This dialogue focused on the theme of youth leadership in peacemaking. Over 250 youth from various parts of Mexico convened to discuss the significance of their leadership and creativity in devising new strategies for peace within their communities. Particularly poignant was the motivation of the younger generation to address long-standing discrimination and racism faced by the indigenous population of Yucatán, aiming to transform historical conflicts into opportunities for positive change.

Chenalhó, Chiapas (February): Centered around the shared traditions of the indigenous people of Chiapas, this dialogue took place in a region deeply impacted by violent conflict, including a recent conflict with the neighboring municipality Aldama. During the dialogue, 53 community members committed to restoring a mural that had been painted over by a political candidate. The original mural, created during a previous community dialogue led by WPDI, symbolized the shared traditions and cultural heritage of the communities, highlighting efforts towards reconciliation and preservation of cultural identity.

COBACH 67 Petalcingo, Chiapas (June): Organized by peacemaker Dany in collaboration with 152 high school students, this dialogue explored how conflict resolution tools can support peacebuilding efforts. Petalcingo, situated in the Tila municipality, continues to grapple with the aftermath of the 1994 conflict, with families and communities striving for reconciliation over nearly three decades. Students acknowledged the importance of sharing conflict resolution skills with their families to break the cycle of violence and promote peace within their communities.



“

Today I realized that due to lack of education and opportunities, we tend to normalize the culture of violence. Many have lost their faith in finding peace. Nonetheless, I am convinced of the importance of using the correct tools to raise awareness and have the willingness to provide support for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. I am grateful for all the support WPDI gave us. During the dialogue, I felt comfortable, safe, and confident that this was a place where for cooperation and empathy, I did not feel in competition. I leave satisfied and grateful for everything I heard and the time they gave me to express myself. I hope we can have more spaces like this and that I will never lose the desire to help other people to be free, safe and have the same opportunities as I do.

Daniela Valenzuela ”

Young community member

“

I believe that we are going through a process of deconstruction and readjustment as a society, which generates uncertainty. This is why my community and many others suffer from violence and there are many conflicts. I think that the Peace Cultura is not only necessary, but urgent for us to move forward as a society and achieve collective harmony. During the dialogue, I was able to express my thoughts and learned valuable things. I understood peace as something more realistic, as a process and not as an utopia. This type of space should be included in all schools where it can reach many young people who will eventually be the ones who will sustain the country.

”

Luis Villanueva Cruz

Young community member





Case Study

Fostering Peace Through Community Dialogues



Date: June 2023

Location: COBACH 67, Petalcingo, Tila, Chiapas

Number of Participants: 152 youth

Overview: WPDI facilitated a transformative community dialogue at COBACH 67 in Petalcingo, Chiapas, focusing on Conflict Resolution and Peace. This dialogue aimed to empower young participants with essential skills and perspectives to contribute to reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts within their communities.

Resolutions Agreed On: Participants pledged to uphold Conflict Resolution training and share these tools with their peers and family members, recognizing their role in fostering a culture of peace and reconciliation.

“The lead pacemaker expressed the rewarding nature of the experience for the youth participants. The dialogue provided a safe space for them to express their opinions and analyze their behaviors and attitudes. Given the recurring history of violent conflict in the region, promoting peace dialogues among youth is a significant challenge. However, initiatives like these are instrumental in shaping perceptions and fostering a culture of peace.”

Dany Pérez

Youth Peacemakers Coordinating the Dialogue

“The dialogue led me to discover, understand and learn about areas and situations for which we need to raise awareness in our daily lives. It helped me develop another way of thinking. Peace is something that we must build from within ourselves to positively impact our environment.”

Yasmín Díaz

Community Member

Conclusion

The community dialogue at COBACH 67 underscored the transformative potential of empowering youth with Conflict Resolution skills and fostering dialogue on peacebuilding. By equipping young participants with tools and perspectives to address conflict constructively, WPDI continues to make significant strides towards building sustainable peace in conflict-affected regions like Chiapas.

Bringing Skills and Values for Peace Into Schools



Chiapas

6

Schools Hosting
WPDI Programs

Learners and
Teachers Trained

457

A vital aspect of the training provided to young peacebuilders is the training of trainers module, whereby youth are equipped with tools to educate and empower others in similar capacities. Following the completion of their education and practical experience, peacemakers residing in municipalities characterized by elevated levels of conflict and violence establish agreements with local schools to deliver basic Conflict Resolution courses. In some instances, school directors actively seek out their expertise to provide this essential training to students.



During the Conflict Resolution training, we learned about conflict, forms of violence, self-confidence and leadership. I enjoy the training sessions because I can express myself, activities are always dynamic and all my friends participate. I think this kind of training changes our lives. In my case, now I always try to think before I act and try to contribute in every way possible to build peace in my community. In the future I would like to be a doctor and help those in need. This is the main reason why I keep studying and learning.



**Norma Esperanza
Jiménez Sánchez**

Secondary student at Telesecundaria Ignacio
Manuel Altamirano, Tila



In the training with Lielman I learned about types of conflict and violence, peace and other topics. It changed me in many ways. I started respecting everyone in my school and even in my family. I also learned how to not be violent in my everyday life. I invite everyone to participate in this training because it is so much fun and you can learn new things. Thank you for asking for my opinion.



Edwin Marcelo

Student at Telesecundaria Ignacio
Manuel Altamirano, Tila



I am a student and I have faced social challenges, mainly, intellectual and emotional disabilities. There is a deficit of social understanding, we need an education that promotes respect and human values. Learning that conflict is something generated from people's interests and needs made me think that great things can be achieved through the attention of the emotional needs of vulnerable groups, since they are very capable of solving and creating incredible things. Now with these new tools, I can think of a community model for the integration of people with disabilities.



**María del Carmen
Méndez Álvarez**

High school student at COBACH 67, Petalcingo

Conflict Resolution Education for Teachers

Since the onset of the violence crisis in Chiapas, directors and teachers from both public and private schools have sought assistance from WPDI to address and mitigate conflict and violence within their respective educational communities. As experts in Conflict Resolution we know that teachers play a determining role in building safe spaces free of violence in schools and other learning environments.

Basic Conflict Resolution Education training was delivered by WPDI for 21 teachers and facilitators from CONIDER organization currently working in Sitalá and San Juan Cancuc municipalities.

“

I enjoyed the activities proposed by the trainer. I learned many things about myself, especially that I like to give orders but almost never participate in completing the tasks. Unfortunately some of my colleagues just participated in the training because they had to, nonetheless I took the opportunity to get to know them better. I also identified that I don't like conflict, I don't like trouble and I always try to be kind. I learned how to see conflict from another perspective.

”

Zuleyma Vázquez Pérez

Teacher at Centro Integrador Social Benito Juárez, Salto de Agua

“

I learned that in order to prevent conflicts, I have to pay attention to every case, it doesn't matter if it's simple or complex. I also learned that I am part of a very diverse team and that we all have to be responsible for our emotions, this is why communication is vital, so we can all speak a common language and achieve our goals.

”

Herlinda Cristóbal Silvano Guzmán

Facilitator at CONIDER, San Juan Cancuc





Case Study

Fostering Peace Amidst Conflict in COBACH 67, Petalcingo, Tila, Chiapas

Context

COBACH 67, situated in Petalcingo within the Tila municipality of Chiapas, operates in a region deeply affected by historical conflicts, notably the 1994 clash between the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) and the federal government. This strife fractured communities and families, leaving enduring scars. Over time, the cycle of violence has evolved, with confrontations now involving organized crime groups, perpetuating instability and insecurity.

Through this concerted effort, WPDI aims to instill a sense of agency and empowerment among students, equipping them with the tools to navigate conflict constructively and contribute to the cultivation of a more peaceful environment within their community.

Ongoing Issue

Many children and youth falling victim to recruitment or coercion by organized crime groups. Recent confrontations and shootings, which commenced in September 2023, have exacerbated tensions and heightened fear within the community.

"Talking about peace in the jungle region is very difficult because conflicts are very frequent in these communities. WPDI's training helps them to start to become aware of their actions and the way in which they can begin to transform conflict into opportunities. Moving forward with the training will allow us to see positive changes, since little by little the students become aware of who they are and they start to value themselves and others."

Dany

Youth Peacemaker

Our Intervention

In response to the urgent need for conflict resolution mechanisms within COBACH 67, WPDI's Peacemaker Dany, a resident of Petalcingo, was approached by the school's principal to provide training. Collaborating with Michele and Noé, local youth, Dany developed a tailored curriculum with the assistance of WPDI. Commencing in 2022, they initiated Conflict Resolution training sessions for students.

Conflict Resolution Skills for Everyone in the Community

28 Trainees in Conflict Resolution Education

The program contributes to improved relationships within communities, addressing both individual and group dynamics. Indeed, each cohort enters the program for three months. They learn about conflict mediation, the sources of conflict and how to be a force for peace in the community.

Beneficiary feedback attests to the reinforcement of their capabilities in conflict management and successful mediation.

Our reach was limited as violence in the region made it difficult for beneficiaries to access our training facility. Despite the encountered challenges, and bolstered by the backing of our national alliances, we successfully conducted peacebuilding training for groups of youths in various states, as well as for a local cohort of educators.

Cinema for Peace

349 Participants in Cinema for Peace

Six Cinema for Peace sessions were conducted at the Community Learning Center (CLC), local schools, and partner venues, providing participants with thought-provoking cinematic experiences aimed at fostering dialogue and understanding on issues related to peacebuilding, human rights, and empowerment of vulnerable groups. Each session featured the screening of one movie or a selection of short films, followed by engaging dialogue sessions led by our staff members to delve deeper into the themes explored in the films.

Through these Cinema for Peace sessions, participants were provided with an opportunity to reflect on important issues, and gain insights into fostering peace and understanding within their communities.

“

I'm very happy because you brought the movies to my school. We enjoyed it and we learned that all people deserve respect. We also played and laughed a lot. I hope you bring back the movies soon.

”

Dulce Jiménez

Student at Telesecundaria Amado Nervo, Zacualpa

“

I was surprised when I saw the movie in my classroom. The teacher talked to us about understanding people that can't see, speak or talk. She also told us that any time we can help others we should do it and it should come from our hearts.

”

Erik Pérez

Student at Telesecundaria José María Pino Suarez, Las Peras

“

I am very grateful to WPDI because they chose our school. We are in a very small and forgotten community near the city, we lack resources. It was a very nice activity, the kids really enjoyed the movies and they learned new things. I hope they can share this new knowledge with their loved ones at home. I also hope you can come back soon, our doors are always open for you.

”

Liliana Paniagua

Teacher at Telesecundaria Amado Nervo



Opportunities for Socio-Economic Empowerment

Vocational Skills for Personal and Career Development

WPDI provides capacity-building courses in ICT, Business and Entrepreneurship and Arts and Crafts. Trainees attend these courses for free and for periods of three months. Depending on the specific needs of the cohorts, additional training in algebra and literacy are made available. With regular attendance and after passing final examinations, they are awarded certificates.

Through surveys and testimonial feedback collected over the years, we have noted that these courses allow graduates to find or improve their jobs, become entrepreneurs and increase their income. Some also use these skills to then pursue further studies.



Chiapas

788

Trainees
in vocational courses

553

Information and
Communication
Technologies

185

Entrepreneurship
Trainees

50

Vulnerable
Women Trained
in Business





Impact Story

Algebra Courses at the Community Learning Center to Help Community Members

Background

Josefa del Carmen Gómez García is a 52-year-old single mother with a passion for sports and forging new connections. She faced financial constraints that impeded her educational journey beyond primary school. Despite these challenges, she sustained her livelihood through dressmaking and catalog sales. Motivated to pursue further education, Josefa recently enrolled in an online secondary school program. With a limited educational background, Josefa encountered difficulties in grasping algebraic concepts during her online secondary school coursework.

WPDI's free basic algebra courses provided a lifeline for Josefa, offering invaluable support from patient instructors dedicated to assisting mature learners. Josefa learned about the program through recommendations from friends in her community.

Testimonial

"I am a mother and a seamstress, but I earn money by selling things by catalog. At the same time, I am studying secondary school online. This workshop has helped me to better understand algebra and do better in exams. The thing that I really liked is the patience that the teachers have. This has made things less stressful for me. It has also boosted my self-confidence".

**Josefa del Carmen
Gómez García**



Information and Communication Technologies

Information & Communication Technologies training is fundamental for the development of this region which holds the first place in the country regarding digital divide. In addition to regular basic, intermediate, and advanced training that run over three months, adults and seniors visited the CLC in San Cristóbal to request special courses for them. The regular courses include learning about the general use of the computer, its hardware and different software. Trainees also learn about Windows, Microsoft Office, Google, e-mails, social media, chat apps, video apps, cloud use, coding for advanced students (Phyton).

“

I came to live in San Cristobal to continue my education. ICT training has been very important for me since now I can make better presentations, the training has impacted all my college courses. The most interesting thing I learned was how to edit images in an easy way.

”

María José Rosas Hernández
College Student

Information and Communication Technologies for children

Most schools in Chiapas lack computer equipment. WPDI provides ICT training for children at the San Cristóbal CLC. This year, we trained 52 children. The topics covered include:

- General use of the computer and cellphone
- Hardware and different software use (Windows, Office, Google, Email, Social Media, Chat apps, Video apps, etc.)

“

I really liked learning how to make videos. The teacher really helped me and I was proud to show what I had done to my friends and family.

”

Keyli Roblero
Participant

“

What I liked most about the course was writing texts and painting in 3D. I learned how to change the color of pages and letters, and I also learned how to add frames. I would love to learn how to type using both hands at the same time.

”

Keyli Roblero
Participant



Business and Entrepreneurship

The Business and Entrepreneurship training continues to be a central component of the core initiatives undertaken by WPDI in Chiapas. This year, 185 participants received this training. Frequently our trainers encounter challenges accessing rural communities due to the heightened violence and constant clashes on the main roads; we mitigate this obstacle by providing online training when necessary.

“

My family and I have a small business. This training changed my life since it allowed me to see that my family business actually has an opportunity to grow, we just need to be a little more organized and make some improvements. If we take some time to work on it, it really has a future and it can grow to be a great project. I would like to continue learning about business and I am very grateful to our teacher, Teresa, for the time she devoted to our group and the knowledge shared. Thanks!”

”

Liliana Cruz Sántiz
Business and Entrepreneurship trainee



Supporting Income-Generating Projects

In 2023, WPDI continued its impactful support for businesses in San Cristóbal and Mitontic, which started operating in earnest since its launch two years ago. This year marked a significant milestone with the launch of a branch of the Women Livelihood Program targeting indigenous women. This initiative is especially vital given that Chiapas State is home to one of Mexico's largest indigenous populations, comprising 35% of the state's inhabitants. Indigenous women face numerous challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, exacerbating their vulnerability.

The Women's Livelihood program contributed to the substantial growth in the number of businesses supported by WPDI in Chiapas, with 31 Small and Medium Businesses (SMEs) now supported, including 16 newly launched. These enterprises, predominantly in service and retail sectors, have collectively generated 392 jobs and provided indirect income to 2,223 beneficiaries. Furthermore, the survival rate of businesses supported by WPDI since 2017 stands at an impressive 83%, highlighting the program's sustained impact on local economies and communities.

SMEs created in 2023

16

SMEs supported by WPDI in total

31

Jobs Created

392

Indirect beneficiaries of businesses (families)

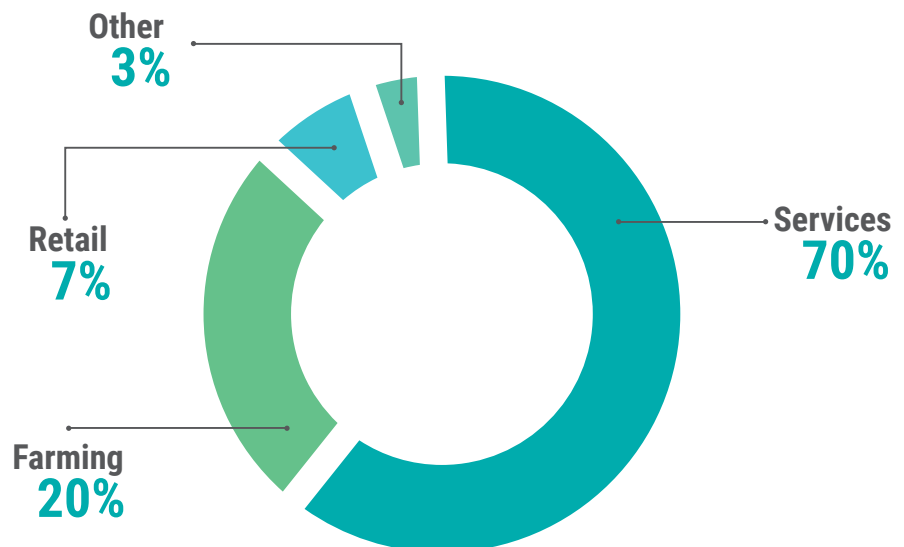
2,223

Beneficiaries of all SMEs **2,615**

As for the creation of new businesses, a key step in the program selected them in a thorough and transparent manner, which we did through our tried and tested practice of running Business Plan Competitions (BPC). During these competitions, participants are tasked with submitting a comprehensive written business plan alongside delivering an elevator pitch presentation in front of a jury panel. This panel typically consists of two WPDI members and two local experts proficient in the relevant field of the proposals presented. Each project and pitch presentation are evaluated independently by the jury, who subsequently convene to deliberate and determine the winners.

A formal ceremony is organized to announce the awarded projects, highlighting the commitment to entrepreneurial development and innovation. It is mandatory for all participants to have completed the basic and intermediate Business and Entrepreneurship training provided by WPDI experts. The duration of the BPC typically spans over two weeks, ensuring ample time for participants to refine their business plans and pitch presentations for optimal outcomes. In 2023, WPDI supported 31 businesses in San Cristóbal, including 16 newly launched this year.

31 Business Active in 2023





Case Study

Empowering Community Entrepreneurship Papelería Jchanvun (School Supplies Shop)



Background

Reyna Gómez Ruiz, a 39-year-old single mother, embarked on her entrepreneurial journey with the inception of Papelería Jchanvun in 2022. The idea sprang from a pressing need within her community - the scarcity of school materials and supplies. Families residing in the area faced the arduous task of traveling three hours to the nearest city to procure basic supplies for their children's education. Recognizing this challenge, Reyna initiated her venture by sourcing essentials such as notebooks, pencils, paper, scissors, and glue from the city and selling them at affordable prices in her town. Her endeavor not only alleviated the financial burden on local families but also contributed to reducing school dropouts resulting from the unavailability of resources.

Challenges Faced

Papelería Jchanvun's inception stemmed from the dearth of school supplies in the community, compelling families to endure lengthy journeys for basic necessities like pencils. The lack of accessibility to such essentials posed a significant obstacle, contributing to a high rate of school dropouts among children in the area.

Motivation to Join the Program

With a fervent desire to nurture her small-scale enterprise and meet the burgeoning demand for school supplies in her community, Reyna saw the WPDI program as a gateway to acquiring essential entrepreneurial skills and expertise.

WPDI's Support

Through the comprehensive training provided by WPDI, Reyna gained invaluable insights into business management, inventory control, and bulk purchasing strategies. Moreover, the financial assistance extended by WPDI enabled her to invest in essential equipment and expand her inventory, catalyzing the growth of Papelería Jchanvun.

Description of Business

Papelería Jchanvun is a family-owned enterprise spearheaded by Reyna Gómez Ruiz, with unwavering support from her mother and children. Positioned as the sole provider of school supplies in the community, the business caters to the needs of local students and teachers, offering exceptional service coupled with accessible prices. With a commitment to addressing the educational needs of the community, Papelería Jchanvun stands as a beacon of empowerment and opportunity within the region.

"I'm very surprised and grateful with what my family has been able to achieve after the training and the business plan competition. With the funds granted, we will be able to expand our catalog and offer more school supplies to our clients. I am confident I will be able to cover the needs of my community and even nearby towns."

Reyna Gómez Ruiz
BPC winner

Our Work in Chiapas: Conclusion



Despite the significant challenges posed by increased violence and complex conflicts in 2023, WPDI emerged as a recognized local expert in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, particularly focused on empowering children and youth. Collaborating with national institutions like Plataforma por la Paz and Jornada de

Derechos Humanos/Misión Resistencia Challenge provided valuable insights into the transformative impact of peace-related courses on youth across the country. Moreover, the progress and resilience demonstrated by young peacemakers serve as a source of inspiration, highlighting the enduring hope and motivation within the community.

General Conclusion

Advancing Peace in Tijuana and Chiapas

In Tijuana, despite challenges such as high levels of violence against women and disruptions to planned activities, WPDI persevered and adapted to its circumstances. The increase in the number of schools participating in the CRE program, from 4 in 2019 to 14 in 2023, illustrates the growing recognition and demand for WPDI's peacebuilding initiatives. Similarly, the rise in community dialogues organized, coupled with a substantial increase in participants and trained community leaders, highlights the deepening engagement and effectiveness of WPDI's grassroots approach.

Empowerment and Growth Across Regions

In Chiapas, where conflicts have become increasingly complex, WPDI exceeded its goals and emerged as a recognized expert in peace and conflict resolution. The significant increase in the number of peacemakers trained, from 59 in 2021 to 292 in 2023, demonstrates WPDI's commitment to building local capacity and resilience. Furthermore, the expansion of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) and the dramatic rise in the number of participants in psychosocial, and cinema programs underscore WPDI's holistic approach to empowerment and peacebuilding.

Impact and Expansion

Across both regions, the results achieved reflected WPDI's capacity to foster sustainable peace and community development. The substantial increase in the total number of people reached directly through WPDI's activities, demonstrates the effectiveness of WPDI's programs in reaching and empowering vulnerable populations. Moreover, the grand total for people reached directly and indirectly, including through campaigns and events, surged from 2021 to 2023, indicating the broad and enduring impact of WPDI's work on communities in Mexico.

While challenges persist, particularly in addressing gender-based violence and navigating complex conflicts, WPDI's continued dedication, resilience, and commitment to building partnerships have positioned it as a leading force for positive change in Mexico. By leveraging the lessons learned and successes achieved in 2023, WPDI is well-equipped to overcome future challenges and continue its mission of empowering communities and fostering sustainable peace in Mexico and beyond.



Partners





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