



WHITAKER PEACE & DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Newsletter Spring 2024

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Foreword

Caroline Descombris

Executive Director of WPDI

Dear WPDI friends,

As we reflect on the milestones of 2023, it's satisfying to see how far WPDI has progressed on the transformative journey we embarked upon after passing our first decade of action. With the reorganization of our activities into four pillars - Livelihood, Peacebuilding, Health and Wellbeing, and Sports - and the integration of environmental policy into our agenda, we have laid a robust platform for impactful change. In the aftermath of the COVID crisis, the full return of fieldwork to the heart of our operations marks a pivotal moment, signaling our commitment to grassroots engagement and tangible outcomes. In our 2023 annual report, you'll witness the culmination of these efforts and the promising trajectory that lies ahead.

Looking forward to 2024, our aspirations are buoyed by a series of ambitious initiatives. The launch of a new deployment in Uganda, in two refugee settlements in the Adjumani district in partnership with UN Women and Norway, promises to extend our reach and impact, amplifying our efforts in conflict-affected regions. Moreover, the introduction of the Women's Livelihood Program in South Sudan underscores our dedication to fostering economic empowerment and gender equality in communities striving for peace.

Amidst these endeavors, we are eagerly anticipating "Faces of Hope", our Gala dinner celebrating our Youth Peacemakers. This dinner will take place in September in New York City, where we will gather to celebrate our collective achievements and reaffirm our shared commitment to peace and development.

Indeed, as the surge of global security crises has shown recently, peace isn't just a lofty ideal; it's a pragmatic necessity. We are at a time when everyone must take action and champion peace. In this respect, I want to thank those actively working on the ground to generate peaceful change within their communities. At WPDI, we know that empowering grassroots peacemakers with resources, training, and support is crucial in effectively creating positive change amid the complexities of our ever-evolving geopolitical landscape. By investing in these initiatives, we help to amplify the voices of those most affected by conflict and cultivate a network of resilient communities capable of charting a path toward a more equitable world.

In the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, the pursuit of peace will always seem like an uphill battle. Peace demands that we find in ourselves the courage to strive for a better world. But it is a battle worth fighting—for the lives of fellow human beings, for the sake of future generations, for the preservation of our planet, and for the simple belief that a world without conflict is not just a dream but a tangible reality within our grasp.

We are thrilled to unveil these exciting plans in this newsletter, inviting you to join us on this remarkable journey towards a more peaceful and prosperous world.

In peace,

Caroline Descombris

Executive Director, WPDI



WPD! Outlines Environmental Strategy

We're excited to announce a major update at WPD! Our action framework now includes climate and environmental action. This change comes from our work in remote, marginalized areas where conflicts often arise due to climate change and environmental degradation. This is especially evident in South Sudan and Uganda, where changing climate patterns affect crop yields and increase land disputes.

Recognizing the interconnectedness of ecological degradation and peace, we've integrated climate concerns into our peacebuilding and economic development programs. By expanding our focus, we empower women and youth with skills to address community fragility and resilience issues. Through youth-led Community Dialogues, we promote climate education and action, including water conservation, waste management, and tree planting initiatives.

Our theory of change emphasizes the importance of community-wide involvement in addressing both

peace and climate challenges. We're designing integrated programs, such as in Uganda's Adjumani Refugee Settlement, where we train individuals in climate-responsive business practices, particularly in agriculture, in collaboration with UN Women.

In addition to programmatic shifts, we're internally committed to reducing our environmental footprint. Adopting a climate and environment policy reflects our dedication to sustainability and contributing to the global effort against climate change.



WPD! Deploys Women's Livelihood Program to South Sudan

"We're so proud to partner with WPD!, an organization that champions female empowerment, education, and entrepreneurship across the globe. Together, we'll support educational programs that will help empower women and communities with valuable business and leadership skills, changing their futures and creating more independence for hundreds of women in South Sudan's Central Equatoria State."

Breezy Griffith, Founder and CEO of SkinnyDipped

This year, we were delighted with the deployment of our Women's Livelihood Program to South Sudan, with the support of SkinnyDipped. The program is at the core of our strategic decision dating back to 2021 to put a real focus on female empowerment, and is now deployed in all the countries where we operate. The objective is to increase economic and educational opportunities for women living in the country, catalyze the creation of new small businesses along the way, and provide future women entrepreneurs with the tools they need for success.

The Women's Livelihood Program will provide a wider range of opportunities, reaching over 420 South Sudanese women from vulnerable backgrounds and providing expanded education opportunities in Business and Conflict Resolution. The partnership will also help to launch over 42 small businesses

through WPD!'s mentorship program and seed capital grants.

Impressive outcomes from WPD!'s Women's Livelihood Program worldwide highlight the lasting benefits of the on-the-ground effort, with 252 businesses and 2,170 jobs created over the past six years. Notably, 90% of these businesses were still operational in 2023, outperforming the average survival rates for African businesses by 67%.

"Since starting WPD!, I've sought out partners that genuinely match my passion for helping create lasting change," says WPD! founder, Forest Whitaker. "SkinnyDipped immediately recognized the need for and the value in our Women's Livelihood Program, and their support will help many more women's dreams of starting a business in South Sudan come to life."

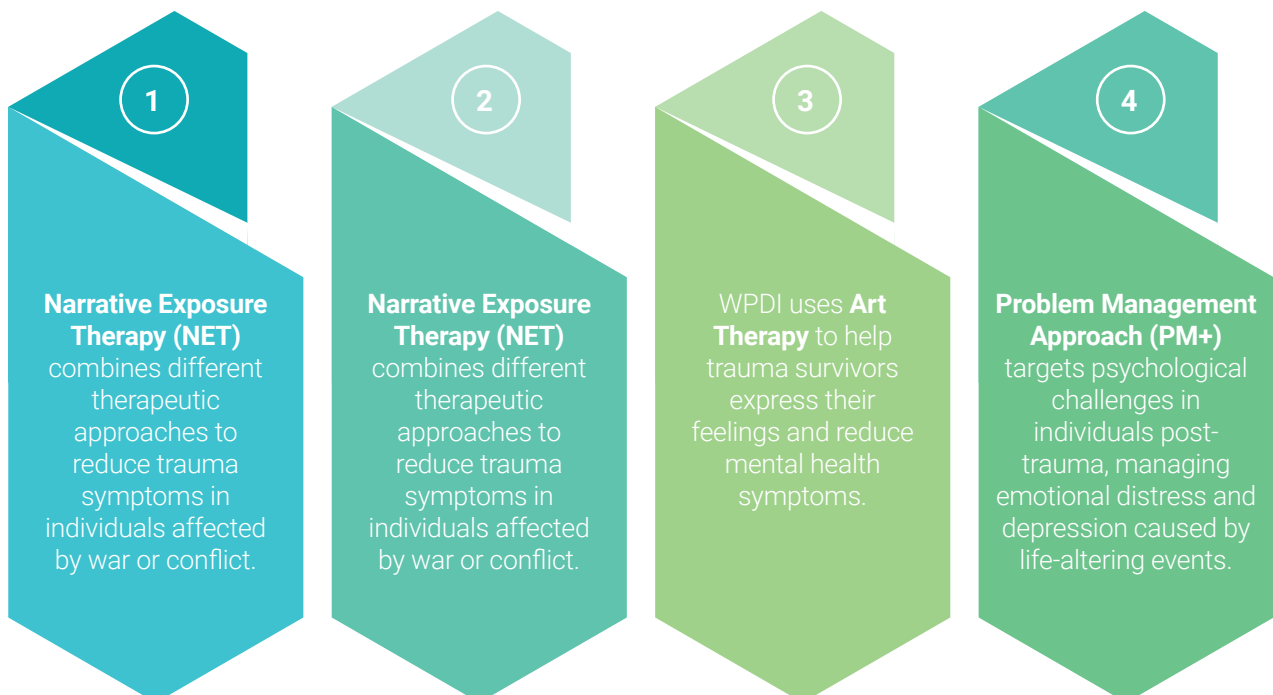
WPDI Expands Trauma Healing Program

To make peace with others, we must first be at peace with ourselves. Often hidden, though, is the fact that, in places affected by chronic violence and poverty too many individuals experience multifaceted forms of trauma and psychosocial suffering while access to adapted mental health and psychosocial services remains scarce if not nonexistent.

In this light, WPDI created programs focused on psycho-social support and trauma healing. Our ambition is to provide young people and other community members with tools that are adapted to their ages and conditions so they can regain their resilience capacity, achieve inner peace and, in turn, contribute to making peace happen among people and communities.

We've massively expanded our trauma programs throughout 2023 and have continued to do so throughout 2024, with support from the People's Postcode Lottery (UK). We reached 2,571 beneficiaries with our trauma healing program in 2023. In 2024, we plan to reach 9,422 people throughout our various trauma healing programs.

Main methodologies used in trauma healing activity implementation:



As a part of our celebrations for Women's History Month, we dove into the foundational pillars of WPDI, you can find our virtual coffee chat with Minenhle Matela, one of WPDI's Psychosocial and Wellbeing trainers in Cape Town, South Africa.



Testimonial from a Community leader in South Africa

"Many thanks to WPDI for **creating these platforms to speak out**. As leaders of this community, we feel compelled to move beyond our individual mandates and go out of our way to restore peace in our communities. There are too many murders of women and young girls in our communities. Thank you WPDI for involving men to open and speak up about pressures they face to display what is considered normal masculine behavior, and most importantly to **hear about the long-term psychological trauma women are going through because of their abusive behaviors.**"



Save the Date!

WPDIGala 2024

We are delighted to announce that **WPDIG will hold a gala Dinner and Auction in New York on September 27, 2024, dedicated to "Faces of Hope" and hosted by acclaimed artist Whoopi Goldberg.** Coinciding with the International Day of Peace, we will provide untold heroes with a unique space to share their stories of challenges overcome, dreams pursued, and successes accomplished.

Guests at the event will discover passionate stories of undeterred hope and contribute to transforming lives in vulnerable communities worldwide. The gala will feature presentations of WPDIG's youth leaders' stories of hope and amazing performances by internationally acclaimed artists. The evening will culminate in a live auction.

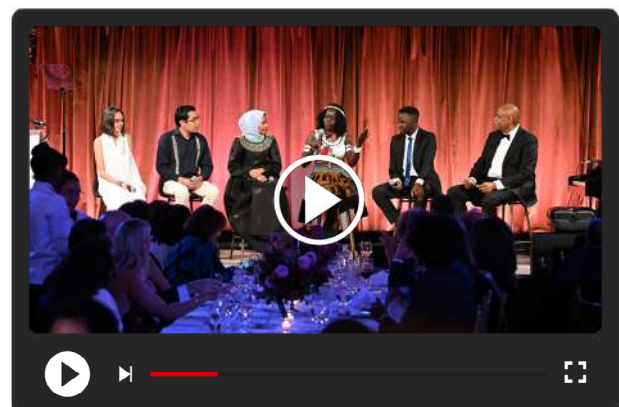
Proceeds will help WPDIG continue to empower people from conflict-affected and vulnerable areas, providing them with skills, knowledge, vocational training, trauma healing, mentorship, and resources to develop their own projects, notably small businesses.

Join us in our mission for peace through the 'Faces of Hope' initiative. Consider supporting our cause by sponsoring our Gala event, visiting our dedicated Gala page (<https://wpdi.org/gala-2024>), participating in our upcoming online auction, directly donating to WPDIG through our website (<https://wpdi.org/engage-for-peace/donate/>), and sharing with your

communities. Let's make a difference and spread hope for a brighter future together.

Everyone has a stake in peace. Everyone has the power to strengthen peace.

In the meantime, you can watch the [video](#) from our 10-year anniversary gala on our YouTube channel:



Celebrating International Women's Month Across the World

As we continue to revel in the spirit of Women's History Month, we are not only honoring the remarkable achievements of women throughout WPD, but also reaffirming our commitment to the enduring values of unity, resilience, and peace.

In recognizing the myriad contributions of women across the globe, we are reminded of the pivotal role women play in shaping our societies, economies, and cultures. Check out our celebrations across the globe!

With UNESCO

For International Women's Day, UNESCO organized a virtual event to bring together students and activists from diverse corners of the globe. The goal was to shed light on the remarkable efforts of women dedicated to fostering peace across various spheres – from international peacekeeping initiatives to grassroots community actions and individual endeavors aimed at building a harmonious world. We're thrilled to share that UNESCO extended an

invite to our very own Youth Peacemaker and activist, Khadija Mayman, who works in the Cape Flats for WPD South Africa, to participate. The virtual event hosted 3 speakers, with over 1,500 students hailing from 60 schools around the world connecting.

To the group, Khadija shared *"Peace can only happen in society when everyone is represented. That's why we need women and girls to be involved. We need female voices, they need to be part of making peace."*



In South Sudan

To celebrate International Women's Day, our fantastic teams in South Sudan are currently running a powerful advocacy campaign across 33 schools across Central Equatoria State, run by our dedicated Youth Peacemakers. Our team is on a mission to

raise awareness about the vital role of women and girls in our society, tackle the challenges they face, and explore ways to overcome them. The potential of these campaigns was over 5,000 people.



At Headquarters

Our teams organized a series of celebratory interviews with female activists across Women's History Month. During our virtual coffee chat series, we explored the four pillars of the WPDJ mission:

Livelihood, Peacebuilding, Health and Wellbeing, and Sports, with the voices of these extraordinary women guiding our discussions.

You can find the full series on our [YouTube channel](#).



Welcome to Our New Hires!

We are thrilled to introduce and welcome our newest members. Their presence brings a wave of excitement and fresh perspectives in our mission.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to these remarkable individuals for their decision to join the WPDl Family. Our mission would be impossible without the people who make up our teams across the world. As we continue to expand and evolve, it is the dedication and passion of each community member that fuels our collective efforts. Together, we will navigate uncharted

territories, surmount challenges, and sow the seeds of lasting change in the communities we serve.

To our new members: welcome to the WPDl community. We embark on this journey together, united in our commitment to make a difference and create a brighter future for all.

Headquarters



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Development Officer



Elizabeth Jackson
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Lyd Halcott
Program Coordinator

France



Raphaël Bouboutou
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Uganda



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Susan Akello
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Coordinator



Acan Prisca Jane
Kiryandongo Arts and
Crafts Trainer



Pasqualino Ochora
Kiryandongo Program
Driver



Stella Kulia
Adjumani Program
Coordinator



Jephate Andabati
Adjumani Business
Skills Officer



Richard Adrawa
Adjumani Program
Driver

South Sudan:



Gila Margaret Robert
Trauma Healing Officer



James Aguer
Trauma Healing Officer
and Arts & Crafts
Trainer



Joseph Lumori Martin
Business Officer



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