PeaceGeeks is excited to have wrapped up our third year of operation, and has become one of the fastest growing and most influential technology non-profits in Canada with over 400 professional volunteers and three chapters across the nation in Vancouver, Ottawa and Halifax. During this time we have completed projects with more than 22 partners, from Liberia to South Sudan to the Philippines, and have made technology more accessible to our partners by giving them a platform to share their visions for peace with the world.

Working in collaboration with these partners, and many more in the future, we remain committed to honouring their local knowledge and providing them with the expertise and tools they need to become more effective and impactful in advancing peace and human rights.

2014 marked a number of exciting developments for our organization. Thanks to your support, our crowdfunding campaign surpassed its goal, raising over $35,000 this year, with over one hundred new donors. We partnered with fourteen grassroots partners on PeaceProjects to deliver capacity building services. PeaceGeeks also established new partnerships with three global partners, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Digital Humanitarians Network and Geeks Without Bounds.

Through our community engagement program, we held eight PeaceTalks in Vancouver and an inaugural PeaceTalk in Ottawa to mark the opening of a new chapter. The most notable talk of the year, the Ebola PeaceTalk, was featured on the CBC and had over eighty people in attendance in addition to those who tuned in via our very first livestream.

Additionally, we aim to expand our community engagement program to go from a local to international level. Through a new Google Hangout series which we will pilot this spring, we will facilitate dialogue among peacebuilders and innovators in the Global North and Global South to strengthen collaboration and information sharing on initiatives that can benefit the broader ICT for Peace (ICT4P) community.

Through a combination of metrics and storytelling, PeaceGeeks aims this year to share with our volunteer, donor and partner communities personal stories that explain why we focus on grassroots partnerships, along with the impact our partners are having in affecting social issues in their communities.

As we look forward to 2015 and beyond, we believe more than ever in PeaceGeeks’ mission of collaborating with grassroots changemakers to help make them more effective and impactful in advancing peace and human rights. Our vision is a world where everyone can leverage technology to make peace and human rights a lived reality. We look forward to exploring how we can work with more partners, communities and organizations in this new and emerging space to better connect towards a more peaceful world in 2015.
Technology today is playing a pivotal role in how we learn, think about and engage with human rights issues around the world. Innovations in the last decade have made it possible to share stories, crowdsource, crowd-fund, map conflict, document rights abuses, remotely support humanitarian operations, monitor international elections and more. Even the most basic smart phone today has access to more number-crunching capacity than NASA had when it put men on the Moon in 1969. Perhaps as importantly, technology has made it possible for people around the world to connect and collaborate on common issues like never before.

Yet conflict, poverty, disaster, lack of resources, lack of education and inequality all create significant barriers for grassroots groups trying to access and leverage these technologies to promote peace and human rights, particularly in the Global South. These barriers make it difficult for groups to connect with stakeholders, share their stories, collect data, communicate securely and know about innovative opportunities to expand their reach and impact.

Through our PeaceProjects program, PeaceGeeks has worked with 23 community changemakers to better understand their needs and to develop customized tools and training that can help make them be more effective in raising the visibility of local voices and issues.
WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website discovery, communications strategy, logo design, mapping

Key Challenges
As a start-up initiative which emerged in the wake of the conflict in Gaza this summer, and the ensuing fall donor conference at which $5.4 billion was purportedly committed to Palestinian reconstruction, the AWP team seeks to create a new brand, a web-based platform, a set of transparency indicators and a communications strategy to help raise awareness about aid to Palestine. These tools will help educate and engage Palestinians in calling for increased accountability from regional and international actor for aid deployed in their name.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website discovery, communications strategy, logo design, mapping

Impact
By the end of 2014, the website discovery process was partially completed, and initial concepts for a new logo had been developed. Properly documenting AWP’s requirements and priorities is helping the AWP team to concrete define this project and work more effectively with local, regional and international partners to help bring this project to life.

Who they are
Aid Watch Palestine (AWP) is a start-up project which works to increase awareness, transparency and accountability of money committed to the reconstruction and development of Palestine. AWP believes that key to creating more effective aid is to put a spotlight on the currently opaque international aid system that is accountable neither to the Palestinian Authority nor to Palestinians. By holding aid actors accountable to the highest standards, AWP hopes to ensure that international aid to Palestine respects international law, Palestinian rights, and local priorities.

PEACEPROJECTS: AID WATCH PALESTINE

PEACEGEEKS TEAM:
Magdi Rizkallah, Katherine Dodds, Renee Black & Neveen Bhadur

AID WATCH PALESTINE TEAM:
Nora Murad

PROJECT DATES:
November 2014 - Present
Who they are

The mission of Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO) is to strengthen and promote the capacity and capability of society members in areas of peacebuilding, security sector reform, human rights protection, gender equality, democratization, and livelihoods. They focus on creating economic opportunities, connecting citizens and communities to governance and policy processes, strengthening citizen participation and institutional accountability towards better leadership, and making communities safer through better awareness of rights and more effective security institutions.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website deployment, hosting, training, logo design, mapping

Key Challenges
Using a community engagement model of change, CEPO’s activities in South Sudan require a platform for sharing up-to-date information with new audiences that is accessible, easy to use, and engaging. Unfortunately, CEPO’s previous website was unable to meet their needs and reach their key audiences because it was poorly designed, the content was out of date, and it lacked interactive features such as social media. Moreover, CEPO had no internal capacity to maintain their site, which was vulnerable to hacking because the code was out of date.

Impact
CEPO has reported that their new website, launched in September, has led to an increase in visitors who understand their key messages. Most notably, they have received attention from policy makers, including the co-chair of the US congressional committee on South Sudan, who inquired about CEPO’s perspective on a proposed US arms embargo to South Sudan in early 2015. PeaceGeeks continues to work with CEPO to help them document and map verified incidents of violence related to the conflict through the website mapping tools.

PEACEPROJECTS: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FOR PROGRESS ORGANIZATION

PEACEGEeks TEAM: Renee Black, Sukwhan Chung, Kamyar Seifi, Darren Jarvis & Sisi Liu
CEPO TEAM: Edmund Yakani, James Hitler, and Eunice Jodrio
WEBSITE: www.cepo-southsudan.org
PROJECT DATES: March - September 2014

Berghof Foundation
PEACEPROJECTS: DIGITAL HUMANITARIANS NETWORK

Who they are
The Digital Humanitarians Network (DHN) is a network of non-governmental organizations who contribute their technology skills to assist both people affected by disaster, as well as humanitarian actors responding to crisis on the ground so they can make more informed decisions. The DHN’s aim is to increase the effectiveness of these first responders by analyzing all available information, sorting it, and filling in the blanks so that disasters are assessed faster and more accurately, enabling those most in need to receive help first. In 2014 they responded to the refugee crisis created by the conflict in Syria, the Ebola crisis in West Africa, and Typhoon Hagiput in the Philippines.

Key Challenges
As an organization focused on connecting humanitarian organizations with crisis-affected communities around the world, the DHN required a strong, scalable and open-source website that could act as a hub for its members and volunteers to access information about past and upcoming activations, and that can be used to activate the network when disasters strike.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website deployment, hosting, training

Impact
The new website has made it easier for DHN members to update their organization’s profile, share stories about their contributions to a disaster response activation, and securely access relevant information and resources about the network. The new site has also made it easier for members to get updates on the latest news through the RSS feed and newsletter, and for humanitarian organizations to activate the network during a crisis of violence related to the conflict through the website mapping tools.

PEACEGEEKS TEAM:
Renee Black, Mack Hardy, Magdi Rizkallah

DHN TEAM:
Willow Brugh, Andrej Verity, Cat Graham

WEBSITE:
www.digitalhumanitarians.com

PROJECT DATES:
November 2013 - February 2014

Berghof Foundation

Photo credit: James Fulker/DFID
Link to original: https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfid/16283849191
Who they are
The Foundation for Women Affected by Conflict (FOWAC) is a women-led non-profit organization in Northern Uganda that provides socio-economic and psychological support to women affected by conflict. Founded in response to a 2007 conflict that disproportionately targeted women, their work is primarily focused on empowering victims by resettling them in safer areas where they have access to legal, medical, and financial aid. They have also played a pivotal role in reintegrating returnee mothers with their families and facilitating dialogue that encourages reconciliation.

Key Challenges
Working in rural and low-income communities of Northern Uganda, FOWAC has limited access to the technical expertise they need to create a website capable of raising international awareness for the disadvantaged women they help. Although many free website tools exist, FOWAC required one that could be easily updated and managed with minimal training while still being attractive to international donors and potential partners. FOWAC also needed assistance registering a new domain when the previous one was hijacked by their service provider.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website deployment, hosting, training, domain registration

Impact
In the months since the launch of their new site, FOWAC has reported that PeaceGeeks has helped them to keep pace with other organizations and that their new website has made it much easier to update their content with new stories and share them online. They now have control over their domain registration and are looking ahead to the next steps in taking their organization forward.

PEACEGEEKS TEAM:
Magdi Rizkallah

FOWAC TEAM:
Grace Arach

WEBSITE:
www.fowac-uganda.org

PROJECT DATES:
March - September 2014

Berghof Foundation
Who they are
Fontaine-ISOKO is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to increasing the political participation of youth and women in post-conflict Burundi through the promotion of peace, good governance, and community development. Using public education and engagement programs like “My Role” and the “Youth Engage Program,” they have achieved notable success in creating new opportunities for women and youth to play leadership roles in their communities that reverse decades of marginalization, poverty, and discrimination.

Key Challenges
Fontaine-ISOKO has worked hard to spread its message of equality, peace, and integrity throughout Burundi, but its previous website made it difficult for supporters to access the resources they needed to apply it to their communities. With no technology specialist on staff and a site that did not effectively communicate their work, Fontaine-ISOKO was in need of a new site that could organize this information in a way that was intuitive while being easy to learn and simple to use.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website deployment, hosting, training, logo

Impact
Fontaine-Isoko is very pleased to have a website that their team is able to update any time. Their team worked hard to migrate from their existing and out-dated website to their new site. Their new site is currently available in English so they can more effectively communicate with donors to support their work. PeaceGeeks will continue to work with Fountain-isoko to help them to also develop a French version of their site so they can better connect with local audiences.
Who they are

The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) is an international coalition of civil society organizations that aims to bridge the gap that exists between policy discussions on women’s role in international peace and security and their implementation on the ground. Their activities are designed to increase the capacity of women’s organizations, amplify their voices at the national level, hold nations more accountable for violating their rights, and researching the impact of including them in post-conflict dialogues.

Key Challenges

With a special focus on advocacy, it is important for GNWP to have a website that can be used to share their information with international audiences, while making valuable resources accessible to grassroots women’s organizations operating in post-conflict societies. GNWP’s previous website was complicated to update and difficult to navigate, making it a challenge for visitors to find the information they needed quickly and for staff to manage. GNWP also required a refreshed logo that incorporated new brand colors.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website deployment, hosting, and training; logo redesign, brand guidelines

Impact

GNWP has reported that their new website has enhanced its online presence by making it more accessible and appealing to new members, partners, and donors. They are better able to feature information about the member organizations, many of whom have no web presence at all. They also report that the sites online form feature has allowed them to improve their intern and staff recruitment process. Their entire team has been trained on content management, so everyone can help to keep the site updated with the most recent news on key events, negotiations, resources and research.

PEACEPROJECTS:
GLOBAL NETWORK OF WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS

PEACEGEEKS TEAM:
Magdi Rizkallah, Lan Yan, Lucia Paolinelli, Ron Boaz

GNWP TEAM:
Helena Gronberg, Eleonore Veillet Chowdhury, Subashini Perumal, Lea Valenti

WEBSITE:
www.gnwp.org

PROJECT DATES:
March - September 2014
Who they are

Isis-Women’s International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) is an international non-profit organization based in Uganda that supports and empowers women peacebuilders in conflict and post-conflict countries, including Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nepal. Their primary activities are oriented around advocacy and information sharing, and have been designed to provide women with the tools and knowledge they need to successfully challenge discriminatory social norms and promote dialogue within communities. By sharing the experiences of successful women activists and leaders in peace, Isis-WICCE hopes to encourage women and girls in other countries to learn how to defend their rights.

Key Challenges

As a global organization focused on providing action-oriented resources for women, Isis-WICCE requires a website that can enable them to upload, organize, and share their information with decision makers around the world. Isis-WICCE’s previous website had not been designed to accommodate the large amount of resources that they had created and it had become difficult for their staff to manage it in a way that made it easily accessible to visitors.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:

Website deployment, hosting, and training, logo refresh

Impact

Today, the team at Isis-WICCE is better able today to share stories about the women they help, make resources available online that can help women peacebuilders, and to better engage their supporters and members in their work. This year, PeaceGeeks will to explore how mapping of sexual and gender-based violence can help Isis WICCE to better engage government in more evidence-based discussions on policies that better protect, support and empower women of violence related to the conflict through the website mapping tools.

PEACEGEEKS TEAM:

Magdi Rizkallah, Paul Thompson, Matt Rayner

WEBSITE:

www.isis-wicce.org

PROJECT DATES:

March - August 2014

ISIS-WICCE TEAM:

Joseph Tukamushaba, Archie Luyimbazi, Ruth Ochieng, Loyce Kyogabirwe

Berghof Foundation
PEACEPROJECTS: NAKURU GENDER BASED VIOLENCE NETWORK

Who they are
The Nakuru Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Network is a network of 15 organizations working to combat gender-based violence and uphold gender-focused government initiatives in Nakuru County, Kenya. Their activities are aimed at reducing levels of gender-based violence (GBV) through awareness campaigns, community sensitization, capacity building, distribution of information and educational materials and by fostering strong partnerships and networking opportunities for those committed to ending gender based violence in Nakuru County.

Key Challenges
As a global organization focused on providing action-oriented resources for women, Isis-WICCE requires a website that can enable them to upload, organize, and share their information with decision makers around the world. Isis-WICCE’s previous website had not been designed to accommodate the large amount of resources that they had created and it had become difficult for their staff to manage it in a way that made it easily accessible to visitors.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website deployment, hosting, and training; newsletter set-up, logo design, social media integration

Impact
Nakuru GBV Network benefited greatly from partnership with PeaceGeeks by going from having just a Facebook group to having its first logo, its first website, and a community newsletter, which is accessible to all of the members of the network, and the broader public. These tools are playing a role in helping the network to work together more effectively, communicate about their work, and raise awareness about GBV and related matters such as HIV/AIDS, women’s rights, and sexual exploitation and abuse related to the conflict through the website mapping tools.

PEACEGEEKS TEAM:
Renee Black, Mina Radivojevic

NAKURU GBV TEAM:
Steve Biko Owaga

WEBSITE:
www.nakurugbvnetwork.org

PROJECT DATES:
October 2013 - February 2014

Berghof Foundation
PEACEPROJECTS: ORGANISATION ECOTOURISTIQUE DU LAC OGUÉMOUÉ

Who they are
Organisation Ecotouristique du Lac Oguémoué (OELO) was formed in November 2010, when a small group of Gabonese residents from the Lake Oguémoué community gathered to brainstorm ways to protect their lake and environment for future generations. OELO’s first project became an ecotourism site, Tsam Tsam, to create a source of revenue for local residents through protecting biodiversity. Over the course of four years, OELO’s mission has expanded to also include fostering environmental awareness in local communities, inspiring youth to become environmental stewards and helping lake region residents to generate income through the sustainable use of resources.

Key Challenges
Located in a remote part of Gabon with limited internet connectivity and a small staff, OELO was unable to create a website that could be used to raise awareness of their work and attract international visitors. They needed both a site that was usable for their team to operate on-going and they needed help in thinking about how to strategically tell the story of the importance of their work.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website deployment, hosting, and training

Impact
OELO’s site launched in mid-January, and has experienced decent traffic since launch. OELO reports that by creating their first website, PeaceGeeks will allow them to build their credibility as an organization, generate income for the conservation programs, and to more effectively share their vision with their partners and donors. They further anticipate that the site will help them to raise funds, raise awareness about relevant environmental issues, and attract additional partners, recent news on key events, negotiations, resources and research.

PeaceGeeks Team:
Magdi Rizkallah, Sukwhan Chung, Ron Boaz

OELO Team:
Heather Arrowood

Website:
http://www.oelogabon.org

Project Dates:
September 2014 - January 2015
PEACEPROJECTS: RURAL WOMEN PEACE LINK

Who they are

Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL) is a network of grassroots women’s organization operating since 1992 in areas affected by conflicts in Kenya’s Rift Valley, as well as parts of Western and Nyanza provinces. RWPL emerged to respond to the women-specific concerns and issues during and after ethnic conflicts. They observed that the exclusion of women from community decision making mechanisms contributed to high female vulnerability in conflict, economic hardships, socio-cultural exploitation and political manipulation. Since inception, RWPL has strengthened the active participation of women in peace work and public life, reaching over 500 community-based groups and helping to raise their voices to decision-makers at the local and national level.

Key Challenges

RWPL has worked hard to spread its message of diversity, coexistence, and tolerance throughout Kenya, but its previous website made it difficult for supporters to learn about their programs and how they could get involved. With no technology specialist on staff, RWPL needed a web platform that could organize this information in a way that was intuitive to find while being easy to learn and simple to use.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website deployment, hosting, and training

Impact

Since launching its new website in August 2014, featuring over 160 pages of content, RWPL has reported that their new website gets steady traffic and has strengthened their connections to partners and donors as well as increasing awareness of their cause and efforts. They are also better able to highlight their rural partners, most of whom are otherwise invisible to the international community. The team is excited about being able to confidently maintain their websites and about exploring how to use their site to better engage their community and raise awareness about their member’s challenges.

PEACEGEEKS TEAM:
Renee Black, Chieh Tang, Ron Boaz, Johanna Voerman Khisa

RWPL TEAM:
Rhoda Litoroh, Daniel Wereh

WEBSITE:
www.ruralwomenpeacelink.org

PROJECT DATES:
March - August 2014
Who they are

The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was founded in 1950 by the United Nations to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people.

Key Challenges

While coordinating the activities of humanitarian organizations that are providing aid to Syrian refugees living in Jordan, UNHCR recognized that the refugees they were trying to help lacked access to accurate and up-to-date information about what aid was available to them and where these services were provided. Despite having access to a UN database which collected this information, the UNHCR did not have a tool for sharing this information with refugees that was up-to-date easy to access and easy to use.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:

Custom web app development, website deployment, mapping

Impact

Since launch, the Services Advisor app has helped to improve coordination and information sharing with refugees and humanitarian service providers in Jordan. Instead of having to search for information on the website of all 60 service providers about the various locations of their offices, there is now a single portal where this information can be reliably found. This saves time and money, and makes it easier for refugees to find out where they can get access to the services they need most to improve their quality of life while living in exile.

PEACEGEEKS TEAM:

Renee Black, Mack Hardy, Magdi Rizkallah

UNHCR TEAM:

Edouard Legoupil

ENGLISH APP LINK:

data.unhcr.org/jordan/services-advisor/

ARABIC APP LINK:

data.unhcr.org/jordan/services-advisor/index_AR.html

PROJECT DATES:

May - August 2014

Photo credit: UNHCR / D. Kashavelov
Link to original: https://www.flickr.com/photos/101268966@N04/10991909166/in/photostream/
Who they are

Women and Children’s Empowerment Network in Africa (WACENA) was established in 2008 by a group of concerned mothers, together with women students from Makerere University Kampala, to address and alleviate the acute and long-term consequences of violence against women and children of Uganda. Their mission is to establish and maintain a reliable platform through which the voices of women and children would be listened to and respected towards ending violence against women and raising the voice of women in decision-making processes.

Key Challenges

Due to many of the disadvantaged women and children that WACENA seeks to empower who do not self-identify as victims of sexual exploitation, WACENA has had to play an active role within their community to change Ugandan’s attitudes and to make them aware of women’s rights. To continue providing this style of advocacy and community engagement WACENA requires a website that is capable of demonstrating the value of their work to international donors. Unfortunately, the design of their previous website made it difficult for WACENA to update their content and even harder for visitors to find information about their programs and how to donate.

What we are doing:

Website deployment, hosting, and training

Impact

WACENA reports that their new website has enabled them to reach out to, and partner with, people and organizations from around the world who otherwise would not have known about them. They are also very excited about having the skills needed to continuously update their web presence going forward.

Peacegeeks team:

Magdi Rizkallah,
Mina Radivojevic

Wacena team:

Maggie Ndagire, David Ngobi

Website:

www.wacena.org

Project dates:

March - September 2014
Who they are

The Women’s NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) started as an organization for coordinating the activities of women organizations and groups in Liberia in 1998, in between the two civil wars that ravaged the country from 1989 - 2003. They now serve as an umbrella organization for over 105 local women’s rights organizations. The vision of WONGOSOL is to achieve a just and fair Liberian society where women and men equally participate in and benefit from decision-making processes at all levels.

Key Challenges

WONGOSOL’s previous website developer let their website lapse, and as a result WONGOSOL lost all its website content. Their goal as an organization is to present a shared vision of a women-empowered and inclusive society to its members, supporters and donors. Without a website, however, members were not always aware of relevant programs and resources available to them, nor were they aware of national conversations that they could contribute to. Moreover, many of WONGOSOL’s members in rural areas had no web presence of their own, and had no means of sharing information about their work. With no web developers on staff, WONGOSOL connected with PeaceGeeks to get our help to create an easy-to-manage website that could use to share the story of their work and the work of their members.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website deployment, hosting, and training; social media training

Impact

PeaceGeeks worked through the mid-part of 2014 to assist WONGOSOL in designing a new logo and launching its new website after their previous website developer let their site lapse. While we worked closely with their team throughout much of the project, PeaceGeeks took a lead role in the final stages of the project to get WONGOSOL’s site launched when the ebola outbreak increasingly paralyzed Liberia. Throughout the crisis, which is only now showing signs of subsiding, WONGOSOL put aside its core work on advancing women’s rights to help engage in awareness and education surrounding the Ebola crisis to help all Liberians move past this tragic crisis.

PEACEGEEKS TEAM:
Jen Allen, Renee Black, John Darcy

WONGOSOL TEAM:
Fredrick Quenah, Marpue Speare

WEBSITE:
www.wongosol.com

PROJECT DATES:
March - September 2014
PEACEPROJECTS: YOUNG WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS KENYA

Who they are
Young Women Entrepreneurs Kenya (YWEK) was formed by young Kenyan women in the wake of the election violence that rippled across the country in 2008. Their vision is to restore the dignity of women through self-reliance, and they aim to strengthen the inclusion, participation, and socio-economic empowerment of young women in national development processes. Their programs focus on providing health services and psycho-social support, governance education, and entrepreneurship, skills training, and networking opportunities for young mothers, sex workers, and vulnerable youth. YWEK helps young women to be change agents in their society.

Key Challenges
Recognizing the gendered nature of the violence that struck Kenya following the 2008 elections, YWEK was formed to empower and support young women affected by violence. Their work focuses on amplifying the voices of Kenyan women in local and national governance processes, and aims to reduce their vulnerability by creating opportunities to develop new skills, businesses and livelihoods. Without the necessary skills in-house, YWEK was unable to create a website or logo that could effectively tell this story and share information about the important work communities, donors and strategic partners.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:
Website deployment, hosting, and training; newsletter, social media training; logo design, branding guidelines, business cards, letterhead

Impact
PeaceGeeks worked with YWEK to develop a new logo and communications materials, such as letterhead and business cards, to reflect their values as an organization and give them the confidence to present themselves to the world. PeaceGeeks also launched their very first website in February 2014, and has been training their team so they can manage the site themselves over the long-term. This web presence helps YWEK to more effectively communicate about what they do and who they help towards helping more people in their community.

PEACEGEEKS TEAM:
Renee Black, Lan Yan

YWEK TEAM:
Bruno Owiti

WEBSITE:
www.ywek.org

PROJECT DATES:
October 2013 - February 2014

Berghof Foundation
PeaceGeeks believes that effective communication is essential to the protection of human rights.

Where our PeaceProjects embody this value by providing grassroots non-profits with the tools and training they need to share their messages more broadly, our Public Engagement program does so by creating opportunities for the international community to learn more about these issues and how they can get involved. Some of the key ways we are pursuing public engagement to strengthen the quality and impact of our work are described here.
RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS THROUGH PEACETALKS

In 2014 we held 8 PeaceTalks in Vancouver that brought the public together with experts on important issues like Ebola, child sponsorship, digital security, and violence against women.

The standout talk of the year, the Ebola PeaceTalk was featured on CBC and had over 70 people in attendance in addition to those who tuned in via our very first livestream. These talks were made possible by our partners BCCIC, Amnesty International, and Oxfam, and a dedicated team of PeaceGeeks staff and volunteers.

For many of our PeaceTalks attendees, learning about human rights issues is only the first step in their personal journey to protect human rights, many of whom took the next one by volunteering with PeaceGeeks.

ENGAGING SKILLED VOLUNTEERS THROUGH PEACEPROJECTS

Volunteers are the lifeblood of PeaceGeeks, and without them, we would not be able to do the work we do. To date, over 400 people have applied to volunteer with PeaceGeeks from a wide range of professional backgrounds, including web and mobile development, graphic design, communications, event planning, legal and marketing and from every corner of the globe, from Canada to Brazil to Russia to Saudi Arabia to the Philippines.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of PeaceGeeks, and without them, we would not be able to do the work we do. To date, over 400 people have applied to volunteer with PeaceGeeks from a wide range of professional backgrounds, including web and mobile development, graphic design, communications, event planning, legal and marketing and from every corner of the globe, from Canada to Brazil to Russia to Saudi Arabia to the Philippines.

So far, we have managed to recruit, on-board and activate more than half of these volunteers, who contribute to virtually every facet of the organization from website development to event planning to finance.

To date, over 400 people have applied to volunteer with PeaceGeeks from a wide range of professional backgrounds.

While we have successfully engaged volunteers during the course of projects so far, we recognize an opportunity to better engage volunteers in between and after projects, letting them know about how both their contribution and the contribution of their peers have helped to advance the mandate of PeaceGeeks and of our partners. This year, we will be exploring how we can implement communication tools so we can better communicate with our team, board and volunteers, and strengthen our own capacity by more effectively leveraging their skills, ideas and solutions.
COLLABORATING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR:
ON HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

PeaceGeeks considers private sector engagement a critical part of our work, and we worked this year to better engage the private sector in our technology capacity building projects.

- PeaceGeeks worked in partnership with Vancouver-based Affinity Bridge and the UN High Commission for Refugees to develop a one-stop web app to help Syrian refugees living in Jordan find information on the 525+ humanitarian service available to them, such as water, health, education, employment and shelter.
- Towards the end of 2014, we began exploring opportunities with HootSuite to contribute their tools and expertise in support of humanitarian operations when disasters strike. We will be continuing these discussions in the new year.
- We further aim to explore how we can work with other private sector organizations to support the work and objectives of humanitarian, democratization and peacebuilding projects that fall under our mandate.

COLLABORATING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR:
ON AMANI PROJECTS

The PeaceProjects program continues to mature and improve, and has attracted the attention of companies like TIO Networks and LUSH Cosmetics who share our values and believe in the importance of our partners’ work. As the newest member of the PeaceGeeks family, TIO Networks and its employees helped us to support the technology needs of Rural Women Peace Link in Kenya and we are pleased to have been able to connect them to this important grassroots changemaker.

LUSH Cosmetics sponsored us for the second year in a row and not only put forward money to support a grassroots partner, but connected us to the conservationists at Organisation Ecotourisique du Lac Oguemoue working to protect the environment in their region for future generations. We are proud to have worked with both of these organizations last year and look forward to engage with them and other private sector partners in 2015.
ENGAGING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION NETWORKS

PeaceGeeks is pleased to be a member of several regional, national and international networks that intersect with our work.

As a member of the Digital Humanitarians Network, we are helping to develop a new open-source website for DHN, and we also worked on several humanitarian projects this year, including:

- Leading the development of the Services Advisor app to help Syrian refugees living in Jordan access the 525+ humanitarian service locations available to them
- Supporting a Standby Task Force project to identify and geo-locate 3,500 medical facilities in Ebola-affected Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia to help first responders make better decisions about where to send Ebola and non-Ebola patients
- Supporting the Standby Task Force activation on Typhoon Hagupit in the Philippines to categorize social media messages related to the typhoon in support of disaster responders.

We have continued our membership and partnership with the BC Council for International Cooperation, with whom we have collaborated on our PeaceTalks series for the last two years. We also recently became a member of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, and traveled to Ottawa in early 2015 to explore how to work more effectively with Ottawa and other Canadian non-profit organizations.

ENGAGING THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

In Kenya, we connected the Umati project - created to analyze social media for detecting and predicting dangerous speech that could be a predictor of violence - with the department of Computer Science at Dalhousie University. Dalhousie aims to leverage big data and social media aggregation tools to identify patterns that can help with Umati’s violence prevention program.
OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS OF 2014

With so many volunteers contributing their talent and time to PeaceGeeks in 2014, it was a difficult task to pick out which ones were the MOST outstanding. This year the following volunteers went clearly above and beyond the call of duty and left us with no doubt in our minds that they are truly outstanding!

Emily Chen has been a member of the PeaceGeeks team for over two years, and has played a number of roles through the Human Resources team ever since. She has worked to strengthen our internal processes, draft HR policies and procedures, implement our volunteer management system, and assist with other special projects as needed. This fall, Emily stepped in unexpectedly to assume the role of HR Team Lead, and has since implemented significant improvement that have strengthened the direction and effectiveness of the HR team. We are very excited to be going into 2015 with Emily as a key member of the Executive team.

CaroleAnne Black led the volunteer team for our inaugural PeaceTalk in Ottawa. Throughout the entire process, CaroleAnne demonstrated great leadership, perseverance and tremendous flexibility. As event lead, she also wore many hats: communications strategist, community outreach, logistics lead, and volunteer coordinator. CaroleAnne did an amazing job in promoting PeaceGeeks’ brand and values and helped PeaceGeeks to elevate our visibility in the local community. PeaceGeeks Ottawa simply could not have pulled off such a successful event without her tireless commitment and support.

Nico Primak joined the PeaceGeeks team this fall to support the implementation of PeaceGeeks third, and most successful, crowdfunding campaign, Heroes 4 Peace. While being an enthusiastic and diligent team member on that project, Nico has since moved on to become the Digital Communications Team Lead as well as the Project Lead for the PeaceGeeks website redesign. He also played a key role in assisting with the PeaceGeeks rebranding process. Nico has been a great asset to the PeaceGeeks team and we look forward to continuing to work with him in 2015.

Matt Freeman began volunteering with PeaceGeeks in August of 2014. He proved himself to be an exceptional volunteer, remaining dedicated and passionate about his role as Project Manager for our 2014 crowdfunding campaign, Heroes 4 Peace. Due to Matt’s leadership, among other things, the campaign was our most successful campaign to date. Despite challenges facing the campaign, including limited resources, Matt worked effectively with his team to successfully see this project through to completion.
**VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR (INDIVIDUAL):**

Magdi Rizkallah joined PeaceGeeks just over two years ago as a Project Manager with our Philippines-based women’s rights partner, Isis International, working to develop and launch a new and improved website. Since then, Magdi’s contributions have been nothing short of outstanding, strengthening both our contributions to our grassroots partners as the PeaceGeeks Projects Director, as Project Manager on 6 projects, and as team member on several others. He also ensured excellence in documentation and quality assurance testing for our Amani platform, implemented and configured our CRM tools, and strengthened our Partner on-boarding processes. We would not be where we are today without Magdi’s commitment to strengthening PeaceGeeks’ excellence and to our mission of supporting grassroots changemakers around the world.

**OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY PARTNER OF THE YEAR (COMPANY):**

Affinity Bridge had been working with PeaceGeeks for over two years now, providing service and support on the development and implementation of our open source Amani platform, along with The Jibe and Cheeky Monkey Media. Under the leadership of Mack Hardy, who is our volunteer Director of IT, Affinity Bridge has ensured that the tools we are building and deploying employ best practices and will be sustainable as we grow the platform. However, Affinity Bridge set themselves apart from other community partners this year by leading the volunteer effort to develop Services Advisor, a web app built in partnership with the UN High Commission for Refugees to help 620,000+ refugees get better access to the 500+ humanitarian services available to them in Jordan. While other partners, including Italy-based GNU Co-op, contributed to this initiative, this project would not have happened without the leadership and dedication of Mack Hardy, the hero-like woman-power of Zoe Neill-St.Clair who led development efforts, and the genius of Tom Nightingale whose mapping expertise was instrumental to the success of this project.
With three years under our belt, and promises for an interesting year to come, PeaceGeeks continues to reflect on our experiences, successes and challenges to-date.
THE CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF COLLABORATION

Collaboration, and particularly remote collaboration, has become a cornerstone of how PeaceGeeks works with its partners, whether grassroots, academic, private, non-profit or otherwise. While our team has become remarkably adept at managing projects and partnerships remotely, we face specific barriers in working with our partners in the Global South, including technology infrastructure (such as bandwidth and connectivity), time zones differences, cultural and language barriers, competing priorities (including active conflicts on occasion) and lack of face-time with our partners. Recognizing and responding to these barriers will be key to strengthening the overall success of PeaceGeeks and our partners.

SELECTING PARTNERS & PROJECTS

In 2014, we collaborated with a grassroots organization who met our criteria for partnership. This fall, we discovered unethical conduct by a senior staff member of this group causing us to reconsider and ultimately terminate this relationship. While we were disappointed about this outcome, we recognized an opportunity to learn from this experience to help minimize such risks going forward. This fall, we undertook an internal process review, and although this review did not reveal any deficiencies in our vetting processes, we have incorporated best practices from the Canada Revenue Agency, which has led to a more robust and thorough process.

MONITORING & EVALUATING IMPACT

Measuring impact of non-profit work is an imperative for every mature organization today, and towards that end, PeaceGeeks recently developed a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework, based on our Theory of Change, to guide our evaluation process. This will help us to more effectively use resources, improve service delivery and strengthen processes going forward. We anticipate releasing our first M&E report this fall.

THE NEED FOR BASELINE EVIDENCE

With ICT4P only beginning to emerge as a field in its own right, there is currently little baseline research with which to establish the technical proficiency, needs, or tools commonly leveraged by small NGOs. We are currently in discussions with potential partners on the development of a research agenda that we hope will play a lead role in filling the knowledge gap among international development organizations and funding agencies regarding the technology needs of grassroots civil society actors.
SHARING OUR PARTNERS’ STORIES

Storytelling is an important part of communicating the impact of our work to our volunteers, supporters and partners. While we are asked to draw a more direct line of sight to impact, our role as capacity builders is not to ‘save lives’ and ‘help survivors’. Rather, we work with partners precisely because they are already affecting such change. Our role is to help develop their capacities so they can do their work more effectively. In the coming year, we aim to share personal stories of both the people we work with and the people they help, and connect their stories to the broader role of civil societies in strengthening peace and democracy.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

While our work focuses on technology applications for peace, technology is not an end unto itself, but rather one of many tools in the arsenal of advocates and activists, who work to solve real problems in the pursuit of peace, democracy and human rights. For these tools to be used effectively and responsibly, projects require passionate leaders and committed teams, best practices that strengthen engagement, and digital literacy around important issues such as digital security.

EFFECTIVELY ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS

PeaceGeeks’ volunteer base grew to over 400 applicants to date, and many talented volunteers have made significant contributions to our work. We recognize an opportunity as a largely online organization to improve how we manage, leverage and engage our volunteers. Important questions today include: How do we better onboard and retain professional and committed volunteers? How do we more effectively capture and recognize the contributions our volunteers make? How can we improve online volunteer engagement and experiences in virtual spaces? These are some of the questions our volunteer-run Human Resources team is committed to exploring this year.
The last three years of hard work have given us an amazing foundation to build on in 2015, including an experienced team, a wide network of partners, a growing community of donors and sponsors, greater awareness of our work, and new opportunities. Over the next year we will continue to grow and refine our core programs, PeaceProjects and Public Engagement, as well as expand into new areas where our knowledge and experience can help others to promote peace, human rights, and accountability in their communities around the world.

Research is the first of these new areas that we are excited to explore, specifically how technology is being used in support of peace-building work. Despite becoming an increasingly important part of how citizens, NGOs and governments support human rights around the world, there is currently very little research about what types of digital tools exist, how they are used and how effective they are in advancing change. With a large network of grassroots partners and connections to communities like Build Peace, the Digital Humanitarians Network, Random Hacks of Kindness and the United Nations, we are uniquely placed to answer these questions and suggest future best practices that can maximize technology’s potential to protect human rights.

The second new area that we are excited to explore is the application of digital tools - both existing and prospective - that can assist aid agencies in improving humanitarian support to refugees and displaced peoples. Based on our experiences creating Services Advisor in Jordan and assisting with the Healthcare Facilities mapping project in ebola-affected West Africa, we see tremendous potential and alignment for PeaceGeeks to collaborate on strengthening solutions in support of complex humanitarian problems. Working with current and emerging networks, we will have the opportunity to expand our own network, create new synergies, and help play a small but important role in improving the quality of life for those affected by disaster.

PeaceGeeks is also eager to learn from our first three years of operations, and we are keen to make 2015 yet another year of continued success with a number of exciting projects and partnerships. We look forward to sharing what we learn along the way so we can help both our community of geeks as well as others who seek to engage in the spaces of remote volunteerism and ICT4P.
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