

World **Youth** Alliance 

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

**STANDING UP FOR
HUMAN DIGNITY
AROUND THE GLOBE**



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2023 at a Glance

Your support of World Youth Alliance fueled tremendous growth in 2023.

New Charter members

7,915

7,910
event attendees

26 new strategic
partnerships

NEW TRAINED ADVOCATES

from Spain, Jamaica, Poland, Mexico, Zimbabwe,
the United Kingdom, Germany, Egypt, and the USA

Certified Training Program launched in
ITALIAN & PORTUGUESE

16 Human Dignity
Curriculum Partners

37
interns

NEW CHAPTERS

in Mexico, Ghana, Uganda,
Guinea, Lithuania, Libya,
and the USA

41 Certified
Trainers

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Advocacy Updates

WYA members around the world continue to give of their time and energy to defend human dignity in education, policy, and culture. The global impact of our work in this area continues to grow.

Kenya adopted WYA advocacy language in a new policy on the family.

Our WYA Africa team played a pivotal role in the adoption of the **Kenya National Family Policy**. Among noteworthy contributions, WYA set the terms and definitions for the document, including the foundational assertion that *“The family is the natural and fundamental unit of society and the necessary basis of social order.”*

“This policy exemplifies how global issues can be addressed with solutions that honor a country’s cultural values,” said WYA Africa’s Advocacy Fellow, Nyingi Wahome. “In the face of pressures to abandon national principles and embrace foreign ideologies, much work remains to make such respectful approaches commonplace.”



“WYA, along with our allies and the Kenyan Government, plays a vital role in defending the family, the fundamental unit of society, which is increasingly under threat on a global scale. Through this policy, WYA and our partners made strides in nurturing and safeguarding the family in both policy and culture.”
— Cynthia Maingi, Regional Director, WYA Africa

The adoption of the Kenya National Family Policy firmly establishes and reinforces family values, highlighting the state’s deep respect for the family as the fundamental unit of society. Furthermore, it takes significant strides in addressing and mitigating threats to families, classifying parents as either biological or foster in an effort to uphold the dignity of every Kenyan and respect the value of the traditional family.

Global Advocacy Fellows



Since joining the World Youth Alliance, **Nyingi Wahome** has been a formidable advocate for human dignity in Africa. As an Advocacy Fellow, Nyingi has monitored and participated in key debates in Kenya and East Africa. Nyingi participated in the second meeting under the National AIDS and STI Control Programme in December 2023. The meeting—which focused on the development of a Healthcare Providers Training Manual on Human Rights, HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act, and Medical Ethics—is a key initiative in Kenya’s commitment to ending the HIV pandemic by 2030, but raises serious questions nationally, as well as questions linked to coercion and control through foreign aid.

It’s not exactly typical for a high school student to read through an entire website, containing White Papers on international advocacy issues, in order to decide whether to attend a summer camp on the other side of the world. But **Rokaia** was noticeably different from the start: a leader, intellectually bright and articulate; she shone in the model UN debate and received “most likely to be the future president of Egypt” in an award ceremony at the end of WYA’s 2013 International Summer Camp. *“WYA gave me a redirection for my life. It made me focus on the question: what is the basis for what I’m doing?”*



Ten years later, after graduating law school, Rokaia interned at a big firm in Cairo but soon realized that *“having to fight for something I knew was wrong made me realize I didn’t want to go into a field that would force me to say things or advocate for something I don’t believe in.”*



Rokaia at the International Summer Camp in 2013

Reaching out to WYA again, she *“instantly felt a lot of joy; I was so excited to be involved and in a way that I hadn’t even fathomed was possible... With my legal background, it’s the best of both worlds. I love how what we talk about is really real... like, OK, we’re actually talking about abortion, the Maternal Health white paper and the Reproductive Health white paper. It’s so in-depth and brings so much clarity to the issues. I’m very fortunate and humbled that I can be a part of work that really helps people.”*

Our research on the Human Dignity Curriculum—an ongoing mixed-methods study conducted by the University of Florida, St. Mary’s University, and the World Youth Alliance—has illuminated both mirrors and windows in students’ experiences learning about human dignity.

In the spring of 2023, we interviewed nearly 60 students with the hopes of understanding their perspectives on and experiences with human dignity after participating in the HDC.

Students described learning about the nature of subjects versus objects, the value of different types of friendships, and the ability to think and choose and act with agency, amongst other topics. Ashley, a sixth grader, spoke about seeing herself in a new way.

She told us: “I’ve been having more confidence in what I do and just not really caring about what the other people say and stuff... if you make a mistake, that is fine. You can just try again.”

The HDC reflects the perspective that human dignity is something inherent and irrevocable. As such, it makes sense that Ashley feels confident, knowing that “if you make a mistake, that is fine.”



Another student, George, talked about how the HDC changed his views on and treatment of others. The fifth-grader told us that “everybody has dignity, so it’s not okay to bully other people because they also have human dignity.” Another student, Benny, marveled that “even a criminal [has] human dignity that’s equal with every other person.” Lily, a seventh-grader, shared a similar perspective. When we asked her about a major takeaway from the HDC, she told us how:

...everyone has human dignity and it’s important to treat everyone the same, even if you don’t like someone as much...so that they know that the other person has feelings too, and they know that if you hurt their feelings, they’re going to feel bad about it, and they might do the same to someone else.

The HDC offers students a window into what’s truly inside another person. Not surprisingly, the students we interviewed described changes in their views of family members, classmates and even their teachers.

The HDC also offers the chance to see what’s inside each of us. Isabel, an eighth grader, identified this essential thing as human dignity, reminding us that “I have human dignity, and I shouldn’t treat myself like I don’t.”



Mark B. Pacheco, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the University of Florida’s College of Education. His research focuses on ways that teachers can foster character development for diverse learners within literacy and language instruction.



HDC: Healing Memory and Identity

Reflections from Clare Halpine, Director, Human Dignity Curriculum, on the HDC evaluation process

When I first met Jarvis, he slouched in to the interview with dirty nails and long hair hiding most of his face. He wasn't interested in my questions and generally dismissed their relevance to his life with a shrug. Today, he says "hello" when he enters the room, his hair is pulled back from his face and his nails are short and clean. When I ask if the human dignity class has changed him at all, he says, "oh, definitely." If actions speak louder than words, as our interview is over, he thanks me for having taken the time to interview him.

Jack tells me about how angry he is; he asks if it's normal to feel physically sick with so much anger inside. He tells me that he has seen his sister harm herself: "I see how beautiful she is, but she doesn't. I know she has human dignity, but she doesn't know it. She doesn't go to this school and so she doesn't take classes in the Human Dignity Curriculum."

Isabel is interviewed next; she says that her younger sister doesn't know what human dignity is: she pushes people and calls them names. Isabel doesn't retaliate anymore though, as she tries to respect her sister's dignity. "Has the human dignity curriculum changed the way you behave at home," I ask? "Yes. I get along better with my Mom now. We used to fight all the time, ever since the divorce. I'm really close with my Dad. Then I realized that my Mom has dignity, too. And so I comfort her when she is sad and she comforts me, too."



HDC teachers and Principal

A mere three months ago, Isabel said she was unable to talk to her Mom. Her schoolwork was slipping as she was tossed back and forth between two homes. "After the divorce, I forgot a lot of things," she says. "The lesson on thinking and choosing helped her remember things." "Why do you think that is?" I ask. "I can't explain it, it just did."



HDC teachers with students

As novelist Pat Conroy wrote, "each divorce is the death of a civilization." But as civilizations fall, they can also be rebuilt. With HDC, that process begins within each student.

4 Bringing the Message of Human Dignity to New Countries

HDC reached more students than ever last year! And thanks to your support, WYA was able to launch new Human Dignity Curriculum partnerships in Cameroon, Kenya, and Lebanon in 2023. Potential new HDC partners were also identified in Venezuela, and Mexico.



"HDC bridges that connection between what [students] have inside of them and what their expectations are for themselves. I think because it's the one academic class that's 'all about you,' the HDC fits well into their daily lives and students share their feelings."
—Jervis Lyonga, HDC Facilitator
at Bishop Rogan College, Cameroon

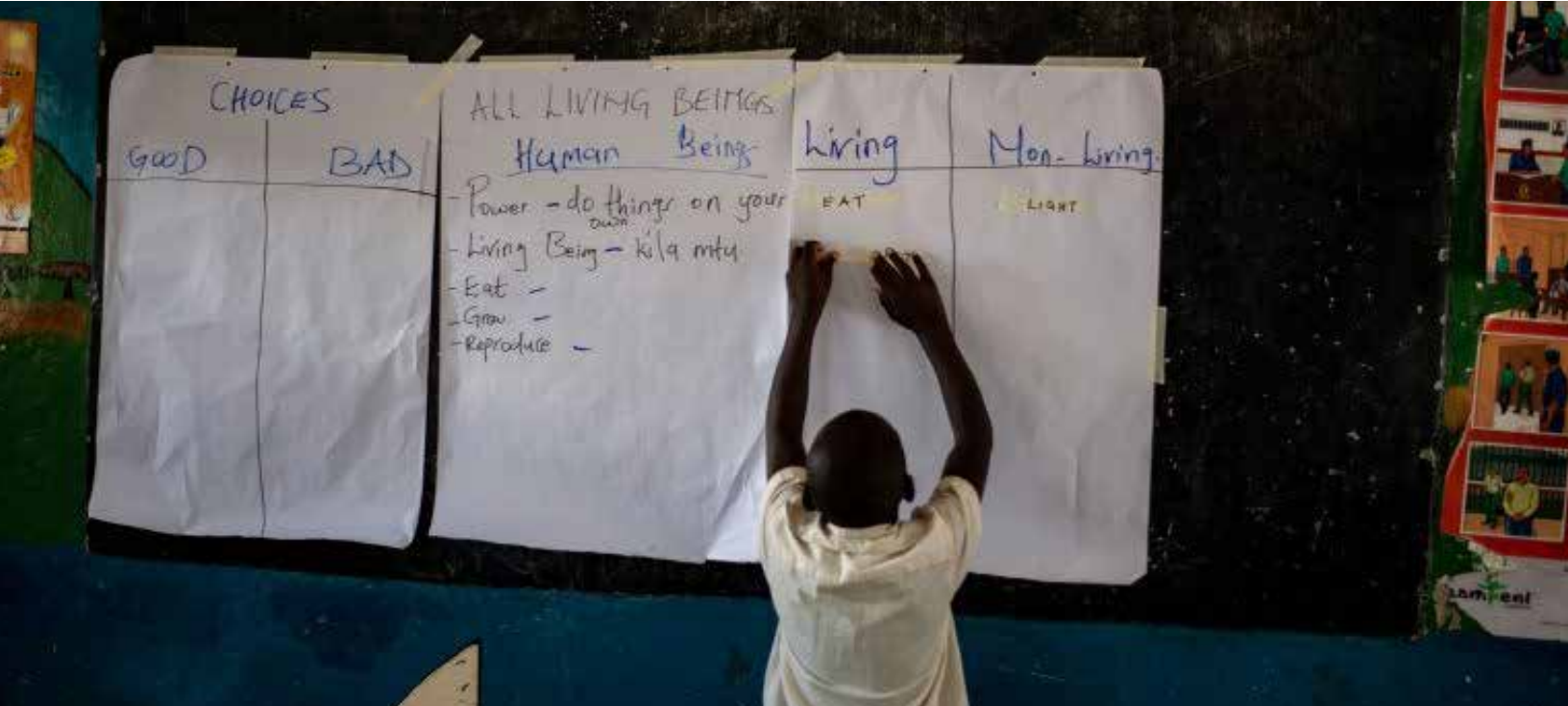
"It Changed Everything": HDC in Cameroon

WYA member Jervis Lyonga introduced the Human Dignity Curriculum to Bishop Rogan College, an all-boys high school in Cameroon. Using discussions of classic texts like Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, Jervis guided his class of 40 students through discussions about purpose, personal identity, the meaning of freedom, and more.

It was the lesson on freedom that really changed the tone in the classroom. When Jervis asked his students if they thought they had freedom, they answered no. However, after reading Viktor Frankl, "about how everything can be taken away from you, and yet in that moment being able to somehow decide your attitude . . . It changed everything," Jervis says. "Their approach to things was different after that."



Before leaving for Christmas break, the students received their HDC graduation certificates in a closing ceremony in the school auditorium, attended by teachers and parents. If class scheduling permits, juniors at Bishop Rogan College will start HDC next year.



Kenya: Bringing Hope and Dignity to Vulnerable Children

Kisumu Juvenile Remand Home is a place where children in conflict with the law are committed by court until their matters are finalized. Some are orphans, others are from situations of neglect, living on the street. At the Remand Home, they are safe, they have accommodation and food, and now—thanks to your support of WYA and HDC—they also know that they have something *intrinsic* that can't be given or taken away: human dignity.

Beginning in April of last year, every other Tuesday, the young people of Kisumu Remand home would gather in small groups, or, little house “*Nyumba Ndogo*” and big house “*Nyumba Kubwa*,” to take the Human Dignity Curriculum (HDC).

WYA covered the cost of the curriculum, and HDC facilitators translated each lesson into Swahili for the children. To meet the challenges of the low literacy level, they got creative, bringing salt, lemons and sugar into the room to explain the idea of the human senses. Gathering plants from outside, they explained the lesson on the *Hierarchy of Being*, highlighting the powers that plants, animals and humans share, and the two powers that are unique to humans: the power to think and the power to choose.



Paraguay: HDC Leaves a Deep Impression on Elementary Students

In 2020, Roció Valdez got permission from Defensores del Chaco School to teach the HDC to its grade three students. Then the pandemic hit—and all classes were cancelled. However, the students received permission to go to school and take HDC on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The program was such a success that in August 2023, the school asked Roció to return and teach HDC to the fourth-graders.

Due to the program's popularity, the school gave the HDC a two-hour time slot, from 9-11 am every Tuesday and Thursday. The children loved the program so much that sometimes they would skip lunch break so that they could keep learning. When it was over, one student told Rocio that he now knows he has value thanks to her.

“At the end of the curriculum, all of the kids cried that the classes were over,” says Roció. “HDC gives them back an identity. Because, in the end, the kids understood what human dignity is and that they were really valued. And it made them so happy.”



“Human dignity is the value we have had since we were a tiny little thing in our mother’s womb.”
—student



WYA Europe won a European Citizens' Prize for its work on Down Syndrome



The Chancellery of the European Citizen's Prize (ECP) presented WYA Europe with the European Citizen's Prize Award for the country of Belgium. The award is given to organizations that "contribute to European cooperation and the promotion of common values."



WYA's prize-winning project—an event called "Social Integration of Individuals with Trisomy 21 in European Society"—was held on March 21, 2023 in celebration of World Down Syndrome Day. Experts, organizations, and individuals working in the field of Down Syndrome shared best practices and successful strategies for promoting social integration and inclusion. The conference gathered over 40 attendees including several experts, civil society leaders, scholars, and Members of the European Parliament. This event reflects an ongoing commitment to advancing respect for, and highlighting the dignity and value, of those with Down Syndrome.

"Every year, people seem more and more emotional... In a way, it reminds us that inclusion of those who are different and the protection and promotion of life... these are universal values."

—Ramon Barba Castro, Regional Director of Advocacy, WYA Europe



In-person programs are back and better than ever at WYA! Highlights from 2023 included:

20th International Solidarity Forum Tackles Foreign Aid and Coercion

The 20th International Solidarity Forum gathered over 30 delegates from 24 countries at the University of Navarra, Pamplona, in Spain. WYA members participated in weeklong lectures, debates, negotiations, and cultural activities on the topic of foreign aid and coercion.



The event featured lectures from Christophe Foltzenlogel from the European Centre for Law and Justice; Dr. Wahome Ngare, head of Mercy Medical Centre, Kenya; Atty. Maria Concepcion Noche, Dean of the University of Asia and the Pacific Institute of Law; Olivia Serrano Nuñez, Executive Director of Construye Observatorio Regional para la Mujer, and more.



Participants ended the conference by drafting a declaration on foreign aid and coercion. The document takes a firm stand against foreign aid being used to pressure countries into adopting policies harmful to human dignity. The declaration ends by calling “on donor countries to clarify and transparently communicate the expectations attached to any form of foreign aid, free from coercion or manipulation of a people’s vulnerabilities.”

It has been shown that donor countries and international organizations tend to use foreign aid as a means to overstep the boundaries of human freedom, cultural identity, and national sovereignty to achieve their own purposes... Foreign aid given or withheld is frequently accompanied by implicit or explicit conditions which force recipients to choose between losing key development support or compromising national principles....This is a form of ideological colonization...

—Excerpt from WYA Declaration on Foreign Aid and Coercion



Tackling Tough Issues: The 3rd International Summer School on Bioethics and Human Rights

Early on August 7, 2023, 40 WYA members gathered in Šibenik, Croatia, to depart to the Barone Fortress (a 17th-century renovated fortress overlooking the city) for the opening ceremony of the 3rd International Summer School on Bioethics and Human Rights (ISSBHR).

This 7-day summer camp, hosted by WYA Croatia and WYA Europe and supported by the Stiftung Ja Zum Leben organization, brought together participants and lecturers in order to study key topics in the area of bioethics and human rights, and gain the tools to respond to the issues and challenges that endanger human dignity. Lectures addressed critical issues surrounding artificial intelligence in healthcare, the effects of surrogacy, physician-assisted suicide, and more.

"[The International Summer School on Bioethics and Human Rights] has enabled me to become more conscientious and responsible in my practice, committed to upholding the dignity and well-being of all individuals in policy and culture, drawing on the World Youth Alliance Charter."

— **Nsikakabasi George, Nigeria**



The highlight of the International Summer School continues to be the student debate, which is a culmination of the topics and content learned over the week. In addition, participants engaged in panel discussions, and local trips to learn the history of Croatia and the old town of Šibenik.



A First Step in Defending Human Dignity: WYAAP International Summer Camp

World Youth Alliance Asia Pacific (WYAAP) wrapped up its International Summer Camp (ISC) on July 15, 2023 in Iloilo, Philippines. WYA members gathered for an intensive Certified Training Program and a chance to share each other's cultures through fun and meaningful activities.

For many WYA members, the ISC was the first step in becoming defenders of human dignity. The theme of the Summer Camp, "Building Solutions by Bridging Cultures," allowed participants to work together on developing person-centered solutions that could advance human dignity in their respective communities.

"[It was] a week of brilliant sessions, exciting and heartwarming activities, insightful breakout sessions, an amazing display of local culture and food, amiable facilitators, and campers that turned into lifelong friendships."

— Alyssa Acejas, Camper



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Introducing Our 2023 Victor Frankl Awardees

Now in its sixth year, the Viktor Frankl Award is presented to exemplary WYA members who have made significant and vital contributions to promoting the dignity of the human person in their communities. Meet the amazing young men and women who've been honored this year:



Nyingi Wahome

Africa

"I love that I help people grow by standing firm in the concepts of human dignity that WYA has taught me."

Nyingi has helped WYA partner with the National Aids Control Council (NACC) to train youth coordinators on a person-centered approach to HIV/AIDS prevention in Kenya. He was a CTP teacher to youth across Africa and trained rehabilitated boys on the concepts of the HDC. He also supported mothers in crisis pregnancy situations by facilitating an introduction to FEMM, our women's health partner.

"Human dignity transcends categories. It is universal. It does not regard race, education, money, age, religion, or culture. Every person is worthy of respect."

Jenn became a WYA member in 2012 during the first-ever Emerging Leaders Conference (ELC) in WYA Asia Pacific. In the summers of 2016, 2017, and 2019, she was an ELC facilitator. She was also the WYA University of the Philippines (UPV) President in 2017. She was a WYA Headquarters intern and WYA Iloilo Vice President in 2018, a Certified Trainer for Asia Pacific in 2020, and the Asia Pacific Head Delegate for International Solidarity Forum in 2021.



Jenn Margarete Bordon

Asia Pacific



Anna Szafarz

Europe

"Recognizing everyone's humanity and appreciating their worth as individuals. To me, that is true inclusivity."

Anna is WYA Poland's Head of Advocacy. She has been a WYA Chapter Coordinator and a CTP and Advocacy Academy trainer. From July 2021–August 2022, she served as a Board Member of WYA Poland. During that time, she helped organize two successful Erasmus projects and created partnerships with other like-minded NGOs in Poland.

“A great misunderstanding of human dignity leads to great conflicts. Only through a true understanding of human dignity can we create strong international relationships in our world.”

Ana became has served as a CTP trainer in 4 distinct groups in Latin America. In 2021, she attended the International Solidarity Forum and helped create the WYA Mexico National Committee later that year to promote human dignity and expand WYA in the region. In 2022, she participated in the Youth Program of the Transatlantic Summit IV – Political Network for Values in Budapest. She was also invited to speak at the Open World International Youth Summit in Serbia on “the role of young people in society.”



Ana Bolio
Latin America



Mayssa Aissawi
Middle East and North Africa

“Human dignity can never be taken away from us. No matter how hard life can get, we still have our dignity within us; and since our dignity grants our rights, we have to fight for what we believe in and fight for our rights.”

Mayssa became the national coordinator of the Tunisia National Committee in 2022. She has represented WYA at international events such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSocD), and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

“It’s incredible how a shared desire to uphold the dignity of every human person can be the foundation for instant friendships. Even though we all come from very different backgrounds and cultures, this kind of international friendship and collaboration is something I want to be at the center of my career for the rest of my life!”

Marietta was nominated as the Head Delegate for the WYA North America delegation at the 2021 International Solidarity Forum. In the summer of 2022, she served as an in-person Advocacy intern in Brussels, Belgium. She was part of the WYA delegation to the 2022 APEC Youth Forum in Taipei, Taiwan.



Marietta Mortensen
North America



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REVENUE AND SUPPORT:	2023	2022
Contributions	732,547	718,394
Program Revenue	27,626	5,970
Donated Rent	12,000	12,000
Employee Retention Credit revenue	6,402	66,238
Other income	94	1,650
Total Revenue and Support	778,669	804,252

EXPENSES:	2023	2022
Program services	649,579	613,482
General and Administrative	73,625	65,103
Fundraising	19,454	3,871
Total Expenses	742,658	682,456

Change in Net Assets	36,011
Net Assets (Start of Year)	132,601
Net Assets (End of Year)	168,612

WYA is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.





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