AC⁴ strives to foster sustainable peace through innovation and integration. We were born out of the idea that creating sustainable peace and fostering constructive conflict resolution require the expertise of many disciplines and areas of practice, the merging of top-down policy approaches with the bottom-up knowledge generated through the lived experiences of communities and practitioners. We focus on supporting the peace and conflict community at Columbia and of leading interdisciplinary research on sustainable peace, constructive conflict engagement, and sustainable development.

In service of these goals we lead four signature initiatives and engage the Columbia community through our consortium. Our signature projects are: Complexity, Peace & Sustainability, Environment, Peace & Sustainability, Youth, Peace & Security, and Women, Peace & Security. These create focal areas for research, educational, and practice-oriented collaborations across EI, Columbia, and with many academic, government, and civil society organizations around the world.
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4 Community Building

AC4 Peace Fellows: The Fellowships Program is celebrating 9 years of facilitating interdisciplinary research and practice-oriented projects, relationships, and learning between graduate level students, faculty and professional associations focused on peace, justice, and sustainability at Columbia University and around the world.

CU Peace: The AC4 Team works to engage the public on peace and foster a vibrant peacebuilding network, known as “CU Peace” at Columbia, through online resources, events and public programs, including the AC4-Link online database, the “Conversations from the Leading Edge” radio show and podcast series, and our Visiting Scholars Program.

10 Complexity, Peace & Sustainability

The Sustainable Peace Project attempts to understand the fundamental peacefulness of humans and how societies in the past and present have maintained and supported peace. The team is developing, validating, and refining a basic model of sustainably peaceful societies, which aims to ultimately serve as a tool for policy and decision-making.

14 Youth, Peace & Security

The YPS program is based on the premise that strategic community building is peacebuilding. YPS emphasizes identifying and disseminating youth leadership and their knowledge and practices in a participatory process between content experts in the field of conflict resolution and local practitioners of peacebuilding and community building.

18 Environment, Peace & Sustainability

The EPS program looks to understand social-ecological system dynamics and integrate environmental sustainability with resource governance and conflict management. Through applied research practice and coursework at Columbia, EPS and its partners works towards environmental peacebuilding and resilience from participatory approaches.

22 Women, Peace & Security

The WPS Program, led by Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee, seeks to magnify the impact of everyday women peacebuilders and contribute to a greater understanding of why, how, and in what ways women have been able to successfully influence sustainable peace in their own communities, emphasizing shifting cultures in the way people think about expertise in peace and security practice.

26 Infrastructure, staff, and support: AC4 as an organization
We provide support to select graduate students who are doing innovative, interdisciplinary research and practice to address current social or environmental challenges, and to gain professional association within the peace and conflict field. The fellows engage with some of our world’s most pressing issues and often marginalized populations, aligning with AC⁴ core thematic areas: youth de-radicalization in Indonesia; wildcat conservation in Tanzania and Namibia; women’s role in peace and human security in Timor Leste, India and DRC and more.

**Fellows’ Program Overview**

- 184 projects total to date, including 24 from this year.
- Each year awards are given to a mix of doctorate and masters level students, and they’ve come from 12 different schools across Columbia to conduct applied research or internships in over 37 countries and across 5 continents.
- Applications are reviewed by an interdisciplinary selection committee of faculty and practitioners as well as alum of the program.
- Alumni network includes individuals from at least 70 different countries and spanning 20 universities worldwide, including conference scholarship award recipients who come from developing countries or from historically underrepresented groups.
- Disbursing on average 62K per year; Distributed $500K since 2009.

**2017-2018 Columbia University Graduate Student Fellows**

Quotes from Fellows:

"I liked that AC⁴ funded such a diverse group of projects from different backgrounds. It was great to connect with the other fellows and learn about research from many different disciplines. Apart from that it was fantastic that AC⁴ gave us the opportunity to conduct our projects which would not have been possible otherwise."

—Claudia Schneider

"What was most nourishing about the fellowship program? Support from the program manager, the Sustaining Peace Forum, the opportunity that I otherwise wouldn’t have had to carry out an international project I’m passionate about; through this project, I was able to solidify career aspirations and gain skills that will help me get there."

—Chien-wen Kao

This year fellows wrote reflections for the AC⁴ blog series “Reflections from the Field”, organized joint-stakeholder workshops in the field, published peer reviewed articles and op-eds, produced reports on findings and recommendations for host or partner organizations, and gave conference presentations, policy presentations and completed dissertation chapters or master’s theses, including one alumna from cohort 2013 being awarded Best Dissertation of 2017 at Teachers College for her work on “Designing Places of Exception as Places of Learning.”
Conference Scholarships

AC is committed to providing professional development opportunities to peace practitioners by sending graduate students to conferences.

International Association of Conflict Management

In 2017, AC awarded grants to the following 6 graduate students to attend the 30th annual IACM conference in Berlin, Germany. Grantees presented their peace research in multiple areas, including business and social organizational psychology.

- Jackson G. Lu, Columbia University
- Kaidi Wu, University of Michigan
- Nathaniel Nakashima, Stanford University
- Deborah Sachare, Columbia University
- Lucia Ferrarese, Columbia University
- Allegra Chen-Carrel, Columbia University

Attending the 2017 IACM conference as an AC fellow was a powerful experience. It was deeply motivating to be surrounded by scholars, professionals, faculty and so many inspiring people in the field of conflict management from institutions around the world. ... I left the conference encouraged and inspired to continue my work in the academic field and to become part of the IACM academic family.

—Lucia Ferrarese
CMM Learning Exchange

AC^4 awarded 3 graduate students to attend the 2017 CMM Learning Exchange in London, England, which focused on “Minding the Gap: Creating New Space for Coherence.” The awardees presented on their applied research linking communications, the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) framework in particular, and conflict resolution:

- Laura E. R. Peters, Ph.D. Candidate, Oregon State University, Post-conflict Transformations
- Julianne Parayo, MA Candidate, Teachers College, Columbia University, Choral Music and Political Reflections
- Tahleen Wright, MA Candidate, University at Buffalo, Bridging Language Barriers between Interpreter, Patient, and Physician at End-of-Life

In 2018, we will continue to support our graduate student fellows in their research and at conferences, enabling emerging scholars and practitioners in conflict resolution field to join international professional associations, gain fieldwork experience, and expand the peacebuilding network.

Spotlight on the 8th cohort of Columbia Graduate Fellows

- Assessing a Conservation Incentive Payment Program to Mitigate Human-Lion Conflicts in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania
  Adam Pekor, MA in Conservation Biology
- Youth Perspectives on Urban Violence in Colombia
- A Social Psychological Intervention Fostering Resilience and Pro-Social Motivation in Prisoners for Sustainable Peace in Nigeria
  Claudia Schneider, Ph.D. In Psychology
- UNDP (internship), Regional Hub for Asia and the Pacific – Bangkok
  Devanshu Sood, MIA in International Security Policy
- Local Government Community Peacebuilding in Libya
  Eleanor Haisell, Masters of International Affairs
- Enforcing A State-led Master Narrative: Use of the Kwibuka Tradition in Pacification of Rwanda’s Post-Conflict Civilian Population
  Gretchen Baldwin, MIA in International Security Policy
- Mapping Social Networks of Infant Caregiving in Post-Conflict Northern Uganda
  Chien-wen (Jennifer) Kao, Ph.D. In Clinical Psychology
- Outsourcing Repression: Forced Evictions in the Brazilian Amazon
  Jorge Mangonnet, Ph.D. in Political Science: Comparative Politics
- #Rhodesmustfall: From Decolonization Theory to Violent Disruption, South Africa
  Kayum Ahmed, Ph.D. in International and Comparative Education
- UNICEF (internship) Middle East and North Africa Regional Office - Jordan, Adolescent & Youth Development Intern
  Megan Germain, MPA in Development Practice
- Preventing Violent Extremism in Indonesia: A Curricular Intervention
  Farah Amalia, Rebekah Nelson, Jaspar Leahy, MA in International Educational Development
Engaging the Public on Peace

We curate conversations. AC4 affiliates, including fellows and visiting scholars, have been profiled in our monthly interview series and in our podcast and radio show, “Conversations from the Leading Edge”, co-hosted by Columbia’s 89.9FM. Our show now includes over 50 episodes, featuring conversations with leaders and scholars at Columbia University on topics such as international mediation, religious literacy and Islam, corruption and the Panama Papers, and youth and gang violence on social media.

Additionally, we invited guest speakers and held events on campus throughout the year, including our 3rd annual Perspectives on Peace series, which encouraged learning on applied peacebuilding from students and Columbia professors, and also welcomed leaders of a grassroots, nonviolence effort from Israelis and Palestinians. Also, we presented an AC4 original photography exhibit titled “Speaking to Peace” designed alongside the launch of the Women, Peace and Security Program at Columbia Low Library.

Through our public programs and digital platforms, including the online database AC4-Link and social media, we help students and the diverse members of our network learn from each other’s unique experiences and perspectives. The value of this work resists easy quantification, but it is fundamental to who we are and what we do, as we strive to hold open space for new forms of dialogue, encounter, growth, and enact a vision that celebrates complexity, ongoing exploration and the fostering of sustainable peace through innovation and integration.
Event Highlight: The 6th Annual Sustaining Peace Forum, March 29th, 2018

Our vision is to increase the prevalence of sustainably peaceful societies. While scholars, policymakers, and civil society have worked to advance peace at many scales, there is yet no unique forum to bring together leaders from these various sectors to discuss the research, strategies, policies, and institutions that can create and sustain peace worldwide. The Sustaining Peace Forum brings together thought leaders on peace and security to address the most pressing issues related to sustainable peace, conflict resolution, and development.

The United Nations has designated 2018 as the Year of Sustaining Peace

This year’s Sustaining Peace Forum explored the global implications and meanings of such a designation, as well as showcase critical and emerging voices in the international peace arena, ranging from complexity science to social movements.

The forum began with a writing workshop focused on women, peace and security, led by Aja Monet, a prominent poet, educator & human rights advocate. Following the workshop, two consecutive panels and then a networking reception with poster presentations by the AC4 Graduate Student Fellows took place. Panelists included Youssef Mahmoud, Senior Adviser at the International Peace Institute, Chelsea Payne at the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, Policy, Planning & Application, Andrew Tomlinson, Director of the Quaker UN Office, and Sapna Chhatpar Considine, UN Advisor for Peace Direct in New York. Members of AC4 also spoke of their current projects, Joshua Fisher, Poonam Arora, Beth Fisher-Yoshida, Joan Camilo, Peter T. Coleman, Mikaela Luttrell-Rowland, and guest Aja Monet.
The Sustainable Peace Project

The Sustainable Peace Project addresses the need to understand the core dynamics of sustainably peaceful societies, an area that has been rarely studied by scholars or viewed too narrowly through disciplinary or sectorial lenses. The Sustainable Peace Project was launched at the Earth Institute at Columbia University in 2014 as a transdisciplinary, science-practice-policy initiative focused on providing a holistic, evidence-based understanding of how peace can be sustained in societies. The project takes a mixed-methods approach by employing archival, expert survey, community participatory and ethnographic case study research, and mathematical modeling, to develop a basic model of sustainably peaceful societies.

The project will culminate in a causal-loop diagram (CLD) of the dynamics of sustainably peaceful societies, as well as a mathematical model and interactive computer interface, which aims to serve as a tool for decision makers and policymakers for forging more peaceful relations within and among communities. The SP project is composed of four sub-components:

1. Mapping the science

The project employs models from complexity science to study the dynamics of sustainably peaceful societies, having refined our CLD over
the past several years. This began in 2015 by 
surveying 74 academic experts from 35 disciplines 
to identify variables they found to be most important 
to sustaining peace. In order to verify this early 
CLD, the project has been undergoing a process 
of proposition testing by reviewing and synthesizing 
findings from relevant empirical literature studying 
the promotion of peace in society. For quantitative 
findings, we draw on meta-analysis to synthesize 
effects and calculate the overall strength of the 
connections between the model’s variables.

In March 2018, the project’s core faculty met 
to further build the CLD to include second-level 
variables identified from empirical literature, coding 
of policy documents, international reports, and 
expert surveys. Then, we began the process of 
connecting these variables and mapping them on 
the model’s core engine.

2. Validating the model

We examine ethnographic, political, and historical 
examples of peace systems (clusters of societies or 
nations that are peaceful) to identify the variables 
that most distinguish them from non-peaceful 
societies. We are coding 15 peace systems, to be 
compared to a control set of data which includes 
30 non-peace systems and read through the use of 
machine learning. This will provide a second set of 
comparison data on the peace systems literature, 
and the team will analyze how a “ground-up” 
algorithmic analysis may or may not differ from hand 
coding of the peace systems literature.

3. Learning with community 
    stakeholders (ground-truthing)

Local community perspectives on the CLD and 
sustainable peace have been gathered through a 
process called ground-truthing. From February to 
June 2016, the project team conducted a ground-
truthing pilot in the Basque Country. Learning from 
this pilot, we are revising our methods.
4. Mathematical modeling

A mathematical version of the CLD has been developed and tested based on meta-analysis of empirical literature effects described above. A prototype of a user interface of the mathematical model has been created, allowing us to simulate the effects of changes to the model over time. This simulation has been recently updated based on the progress made by the faculty during the March 2018 meeting. The project’s quantitative testing of the qualitative model has found that there is not one single variable that can promote peace within a system that includes both positive (peace promoting) and negative (peace preventing) variables; rather, it takes a number of peace promoting variables to overcome negative effects and create a more peaceful system. Without the interaction and impact of multiple peace-promoting variables within the system, the system will move towards negative, peace preventing states. In addition, the project is employing data science methods to validate the model. This includes using data from Twitter to measure variables in the model between different groups as well as sentiment analysis of past, present and future time periods.

Publications, Conferences, and Events

Since the project began in 2014, we have had 18 publications, including journal articles, book chapters and editorial pieces. Of these 18, ten were published or are currently under review this year. The project has also been presented at numerous conferences, events and policy forums.

At the International Peace Institute (IPI), team members presented preliminary project findings to representatives from Permanent Missions to the UN, civil society organizations, and UN staff at the roundtable discussion, ‘What Does Empirical Research Tell Us About Sustaining Peace?’ (November 2017).
A second event in March 2018 was a panel discussion where Dr. Peter T. Coleman presented a project overview in dialogue with other academics, practitioners and policymakers. The project was also presented at the 30th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Conflict Management in Berlin, Germany in July 2017, at the Peace and Justice Association Conference in Birmingham, Alabama in October 2017, and at the Association of International Educators Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in May 2017.

The project has articles under review at different journals and was also invited to submit a manuscript to American Psychologist to highlight the importance of multi-disciplinary research teams and the contributions of psychology within such teams. A number of blogs and opinion pieces were also published over the past year on the project’s progress, current evidence base, and lessons learned to date. This includes a response to the UN Secretary-General’s recent report, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, providing an update and steps forward on the UN’s progress in implementing the twin resolutions on sustaining peace of the UN Security Council and General Assembly.
Youth, Peace & Security

Strategic Community Building as Peace Building in Medellín, Colombia

Current projects work with youth leaders and youth organizations to enhance their already existing enthusiasm, motivation, and knowledge, and to support their role as change agents in promoting peace. The overall intent is to develop a learning network in which youth leaders learn from each other through participatory projects, to ultimately build a worldwide community of practice.

In a workshop focused on coordinated management of meaning by YPS Director Dr. Beth Fisher-Yoshida, youth community leaders learned to deconstruct complex communication, consider alternative perspectives, and sequence their communication in a logical flow as active agents to make better social worlds. As a result of this workshop, the participants were better able to articulate the nature of their interventions and thus carry out peacebuilding initiatives that were better planned and had a longer life cycle. AR-T C8, AC4’s main local partner in this sector of Medellín, is providing the space for organizations from all around the community to gather and reflect upon their individual efforts, share their methods and practices, and explore possibilities for collective work.

We have been working this past year to develop one such avenue of collective work, piloting a Social Lab for August 2018 in Castilla, Comuna 5. It aims to create a “map of the city” to stimulate the most representative sectors of Medellín and act on a common issue/question to be elicited from conversations. Through a process of networking, speaking with stakeholders, framing exercises, and supporting youth leadership through the arts (graffiti, hip hop, etc.), we have received growing interest from residents.
Key Findings: Colombia has been embroiled in 50+ years of civil war and internal conflict, and Medellín has a high number of internally displaced persons. Although youth are often framed as causing or perpetuating violence, we find that they are actually engaged in strategic community building - taking care of themselves and other youth in creative ways through the arts. In the midst of conflict, the constructive ability to express themselves and change their narrative through the arts has been empowering.
Youth, Peace, and Security at the United Nations

Learning from our work on the ground, we continue to support the UN global agenda on YPS in response to UN Resolution 2250, which requests that the Secretary-General “carry out a progress study on the youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional, and international levels.” We contributed its expertise to this agenda with the “Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security: Medellin Case Study.”

In 2017-2018, YPS has actively participated in 1) the UN inter-agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding, 2) the UN Steering Committee for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, and 3) the UN Global Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. AC4 was represented in dozens of UN meetings of the working group, attending high-level events supporting young leaders including breakfast with world leaders, ministerial meetings, and security council meetings.

Currently, there is momentum at the UN paying attention to and assigning resources to youth development on a global scale. With this support, we are also developing a Youth Leadership Certificate, working with UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to create online modules for youth leadership development. UNITAR and AC4 also co-hosted the event, “Putting into practice UNSCR Resolution 2250 and the recommendations of the YPS Global Study” on April 26th, 2018. The global agenda continues to include progress for youth and we are privileged to be at the forefront of the discussions, events, and eventually, the implementation of this transformative new way forward for young people.

NICE Program Evaluation in Rockland County, New York

Between October 2017 and June 2018, we have engaged in an evaluation of the Nurturing Inclusive Community Environment (NICE) Program, a collaboration between We Oppose Violence Everywhere Now (WOVEN) and Creative Responses to Conflict (CRC), which is currently being piloted in two public high schools in Rockland County, New York. Emotional support staff from the NICE Program engage in mediation, community-building, counseling, and conflict resolution interventions to address and prevent school violence and behavioral issues, promote student success, and contribute to a safe and peaceful school environment. Through administering surveys, conducting interviews and focus groups, and analyzing secondary data provided by the schools, YPS aims to explore the impact of the NICE Program and identify the
program’s strengths and areas for improvement. The YPS team collected data from school sites in October 2017 and February, March, April, and May 2018, and will create recommendations to inform the program’s continued activities in Rockland County and its potential expansion and growth. So far, we have interviewed thirty-nine school staff members, including NICE staff, teachers, administrators, security aides, and guidance counselors, and have interviewed and/or conducted focus groups with almost seventy students.

“Putting into practice UNSCR Resolution 2250 and the Recommendation of the YPS Global Study,” an event co-organized by AC4 and UNITAR to the UN Security Council. Thursday, April 26th, 2018. Photo credit: Kobi Skolnick.
The EPS program emphasizes applied research practice and coursework at Columbia around the intersections of environment, conflict management, and peacebuilding. This past year, we have focused on a variety of participative projects – research, applied, and educational – on a wealth of themes ranging from conservation, human rights, extractive industries, wildlife management, climate resilience, and innovation. By continuing projects with longstanding partners and building new collaborations, EPS has maintained its work in South America, the Middle East, Africa, and the Pacific.

A focus in 2018 has been on conflict-sensitive conservation of protected areas, with extensive applied work in Madre de Dios, Peru, on multiple angles of conservation strategies. 2017-2018 saw the culmination of a multi-year, USAID-funded project in partnership with the Amazon Conservation Association and local partners. Building on the
link between natural resources and conflict, EPS assisted in the monitoring and evaluation of a conflict management and land use strategy in the Amarakaeri National Reserve and its environs. Working with the land managers of the reserve itself, the study employed a mixed-method research design in practice that sought to strengthen dialogue and conflict management institutions, as well as prevent conflict over resources in the future. The end of the project emphasized the importance of governance institutions in managing conflict in order to ensure conservation goals, with lessons learned regarding project management and long-term sustainability of impacts.

Dr. Joshua Fisher and his students in Israel and Jordan during the Regional Environmental Sustainability Class in July 2017.

Left and Right Images: Research on the social and environmental impacts of mine tailings disposal around Porgera Gold Mine, Papua New Guinea, in 2016.
Academic research in Madre de Dios took place in 2017 in partnership with Manhattan College School of Business. A cohort of students and researchers visited the region to assess different income scenarios in a protected area, in order to understand the economic dynamics behind livelihood decisions. Some livelihoods, such as gold mining, are known to be relatively lucrative but often lead to deforestation and pollution. On the other hand, more local conservation-friendly livelihoods exist, including fish farming and brazil nut harvesting. Upon economic analysis based on data retrieved from the field, these sustainable livelihoods were found to have potential incomes comparable or higher to that of mining with some modifications. Sharing this research may reveal alternative livelihood strategies to deforestation and encourage forest-friendly activities at the individual level.

We have further engaged with the relationship between communities, natural resources, and conflict impacted by extractive industry. In 2017-2018, EPS staff were involved in the preparation of a research paper funded partially by UNESCO on a gold mine in Biharamulo, Tanzania, undergoing a transition of ownership. Through interviews with community members around the mines in January 2017, the data was coded and analyzed, showing a complex relationship between corporate social responsibility, relative community deprivation, and the role of public versus private institutions.

Other research around the Porgera gold mine in Papua New Guinea culminated this year with the completion of a multi-method human rights report on the social and environmental impacts of the mine’s riverine tailings disposal method. This year has seen the beginnings of the frameworks for best practices and human rights fact-finding reports, spurring international attention and corporate collaboration.

Above Image: Land use planning exercises in Madre de Dios, Peru, 2018.
Recently, AC⁴ embarked on a new collaboration with the UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States in Amman, Jordan, entitled “Ecosystem Resilience and Human Security in the Arab Region: Assessing adaptive capacity and resilience of local socio-ecological systems in face of converging pressures from climate change and conflict.” Though in its initial stages, the joint research builds on previous academic and policy works, hoping to explore complex systems in the Middle East in order to better engage resilience strategies in the face of environmental change.

We also continued an ongoing collaboration on Sustainable Human Development with the Agirre Lehendekaria Center for Social and Political Studies at the University of the Basque Country. Started in 2012, that collaboration has explored sustainability metrics in development, sustainable livelihoods in emerging economies, and the role of culture and innovation in social transformation. In 2017 we moved the collaboration further by launching a visiting scholar program for Basque academics to work with AC⁴.

Finally, AC⁴’s Director and EPS lead, Dr. Joshua Fisher, has maintained his educational work teaching the summer 2017 field course, “Regional Environmental Sustainability in the Middle East” in Israel, Jordan, and Palestine, as well as the spring 2018 course “Environmental Conflict Resolution Strategies” at the School of Professional Studies.

The Earth Institute’s Women, Peace and Security (WPS) program, led by Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee, contributes to greater global and regional understanding of the diverse roles women play to successfully influence sustainable peace and promote human security through everyday activism. Through education, public service, and research, the WPS program advances the visibility and knowledge exchange among women peacekeepers and practitioners – domestically and internationally – and disseminates lessons learned from their experiences.

WPS is AC’s newest initiative and has grown tremendously since its inception. Since 2016, the WPS team has developed a theory of change and an ideological strategy guided by four principles that inform the program’s mission and execution: 1) The need to increase the visibility of grassroots women peacebuilders and shed light on the types of peace work and diverse strategies they employ; 2) An approach that frames issues of security beyond only militarization and war; 3) A commitment to strengthen and develop new analytical tools; and 4) A belief that women’s peacebuilding and mobilization efforts operate in various contexts, including the United States.

This year, WPS shaped public dialogues about peace and security in a number of forums in light of these principles. As a global thought leader, WPS Executive Director Leymah Gbowee articulated our theory of change at various key meetings and events domestically and around the globe. For example, in January 2018, Ms. Gbowee, was appointed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for a year appointment to serve on G7’s Gender and Equality
Advisory Council. As co-chair of the working group on “building a more peaceful and secure world,” Leymah Gbowee’s ongoing participation in the G7 Gender Advisory Council helps ensure the council’s purpose to “ensure that gender equality and women’s empowerment are integrated across all themes, activities, and initiatives” discussed during the G7 summit. Gbowee also serves as a Sustainable Development Goals Advocate for the United Nations and this past year was selected by the UN Secretary General to serve as a Member of his High Level Advisory Board on Mediation. In 2018, Ms. Gbowee was named as one of the Top 100 Most Influential People in Gender Policy by Apolitical, and one of the World’s 50 Greatest Leaders by Fortune Magazine.

In addition to influencing public dialogues and the policy arena around peace and security, we spent the last year developing and deepening key institutional partnerships and hosting events for practitioners and activists to share resources and strategies.

WPS Program Launch

The public launch of the WPS program took place in October 2017 at Columbia’s Rotunda Low Library and marked a public symposium examining the possibilities, challenges and complexities of a global, intersectional women, peace and security agenda. Twelve guest speakers from around the world spoke at the symposium and highlighted the importance of grassroot engagement. Keynote speaker Graca Samo, Grassroots Feminist Activist and International Coordinator for World March for Women, highlighted why new tools are needed for understanding what “counts” as women’s participation in peace activism across the globe.
The October Launch of the WPS program also unveiled an original photography exhibition, “Voices of Everyday Peace and Security: Portraits from Mozambique and New York City,” which showcased synergies among frontline women activists in the Global North and Global South. WPS has worked closely with partners in Maputo, Mozambique and New York City to learn more about how frontline women around the world mobilize for change in light of their particular socio-political contexts. In March 2017, we traveled to Maputo, Mozambique to meet with community women leaders, NGO personnel, and civil society groups to gain a better understanding of Mozambican women’s involvement in formal and informal peace processes. We asked grassroots activists both in Maputo and New York City what peace and security mean to them, and how an initiative like the WPS program could be useful to the work these women do.
Inaugural Peace and Social Change Workshop

Following on the learning from WPS’ year of listening, and in an effort to support and convene grassroots and social change practitioners working on issues less commonly associated with a peace and security agenda, we hosted a group of 30 frontline activists, practitioners, and academics hailing from ten states across the United States in May 2018. The purpose of the Inaugural WPS Workshop was to generate knowledge, build skills, strengthen relationships and exchange strategies amongst front-line advocates and organizers. The workshop was specifically for grassroots activists working within the United States and included issues of racial justice, economic equity, sexual and reproductive rights, environmental sustainability, and other topics. Participants had the opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities they face in their work while identifying opportunities for strategic collaboration across their diverse social movements and organizations.

Presentations & "Participation"

Associate Program Director, Dr. Mikaela Luttrell Rowland, highlighted the importance of centering the voices of grassroots activists at AC4’s annual Sustaining Peace Forum. In dialogue with writer, poet, and Human Rights Advocate, Aja Monet, the two discussed the need and possibilities for re-imagining the very categories of “peace and security” in this contemporary moment within the United States. Dr. Luttrell-Rowland spoke of the methodological challenges and importance of expanding what counts as “participation” in a paper she delivered in June at Harvard Law School entitled “Visible Subjects, Invisible Frames” about original ethnographic work she has done with women and children in Lima, Peru.

By elevating the vital role of, and relationships between, grassroots women in making and sustaining peace, we have had a full year of upending and stretching our understandings of the basic categories of women, peace and security.
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**AC^4 Staff**

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  Executive Director of WPS, Nobel Peace Laureate

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