

## *Testimonials from Diploma in Social Innovation Recipients*

### ***Maria Luisa Hernández – Costa Rica, Manager at Latin American & Caribbean Network of Environmental Funds***



I have learnt about myself, about the challenges others face and have gained skills that I don't think I would have been able to acquire elsewhere. The learning environment fostered by the Centre's staff and professors is unique. They make you feel comfortable and take care of every detail to make the experience memorable and productive. With these tools, I will be embarking upon a social entrepreneurship project within the next year. I hope to have a significant impact in Costa Rican society, and I know I can count on my classmates and professors to give me feedback and guide me through this process. At the end of the Diploma journey, you become part of a highly educated and committed group of people who are passionate about social change – they'll have your back and help you fulfill your mission.

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### ***Patricia Talbot – USA, Education Consultant at Blue Roads Education Group***



I have been so fortunate to come across the Diploma in Social Innovation at a time of great personal and professional transition. I found that the courses remained relevant to my goals throughout this transition and even helped me clarify next steps. Each course allowed me to think more deeply about my project and receive valuable and timely feedback on specific aspects of the work. As I now start my own small education consulting business, I'm using all that I learned in the courses to get started out right with a socially responsible business plan and a far reaching social media plan that will allow me to continue my work in leadership development for rural educators seeking to better prepare their students for an unpredictable future.

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### ***German Robles-Osuna – Mexico, Peacebuilding Program Specialist at UNDP***



I had a tremendous experience throughout the Diploma program. Webinars, readings, Skype discussions, online simulations, assignments, and simply interacting with and learning from other classmates and professors was more than I was looking for. Everything prepared me to put my 12 years of professional experience and personal aspirations into context, helping me to identify ways to move forward and strengthening my passion to deliver results. One of the core pillars of this program is to push you to create innovative ways to design (and implement) projects, programs and even policies that challenge traditional assumptions.

***Dr. Chris Beehner – USA, Professor of Business at Seminole State College of Florida***



The experience was life changing. I acquired the necessary skills to create myself as an agent of social change. The greatest part of my experience was the connections that I made with people with common passions. I engaged with people from all over the world, which made me feel like I was part of a greater movement of people seeking to change the world through social innovation. I have applied what I have learned in retooling my career where I can have maximum impact on my local community as well as the global community, finding my niche within higher education – sustainable business education. This program is perfect for any social entrepreneur, scholar, or public official who has a project, vision, or idea, and wishes to put it in motion.

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***Kristen Palana – USA (Citizen) / Malawi (Residence), Artist, Educator and Author***



This program has transformed my life, helping me to create real, positive social change. As an online educator, a published author, and an artist, I now have a newfound resolve and commitment to my work that seeks to promote positive social change. Thank you UPEACE for the wonderful nudges and guidance along the way. Now, I find myself making art, design, and multimedia for UN organizations including UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA, and WFP. It has been a wonderful journey and I can't wait to see what else lies ahead.

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***Dee Brooks – Australia, Community worker and Consultant***



As a busy professional and mother, I wasn't prepared to commit to a Master's Degree, but this Diploma was my answer. With flexible course schedules, and high-quality content that was well-suited to my launch into private consultancy, this experience was just what I needed. Not only did I learn from highly knowledgeable tutors, I learned by actively engaging with other students online, from around the world, through group activities and by sharing our own stories of success and strategies for addressing challenges in our work! The facilitators were readily available throughout each course and created a professional, dynamic and collegial space where teaching and learning was made exciting, relevant and fun. Upon completing the Diploma of Social Innovation, I have revisited the course notes

and resources regularly – this is the only program that, in all my years of training, I have referred back to so often and I'm sure I will continue to do so!

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***Emerimana Daniel Christian – Burundi (Citizen) / Canada (Residence), Facilitator at NEEDS nonprofit***



The UPEACE Diploma program has shaped my attitude and nurtured me toward being able to lead positive social change. I've learned extremely practical skills and feel prepared me to be an influential contributor in all that I do. With the support of the knowledgeable instructors and my fellow changemakers, I built a clear vision of the social enterprise that I'll be launching. Their amazing team is there to support you every step of the way, from answering questions to guiding you to achieve your goals and stay focused on your entrepreneurial journey.

**Arno Wolter - Germany, Consultant on International Paralympic Committee**



How can I ensure that I can give something back to my community and to society? This is the question that this program helped me answer. This 5-course program has given me new ideas and techniques so that I can best serve those I work with, applying social innovation to the sports arena. I've also been able to connect with many interesting people from all over the world, hear their perspectives and receive valuable input and inspiration for my projects. I also appreciated the way of learning. It was never too theoretical, but very practical and hands-on. It gave me tools and ideas that were useful for my personal and work-related projects. And, while there is structure and timelines during the courses, there is also enough flexibility to learn at my pace and align the content with my own, unique context.

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**Monica Harvin - El Salvador, Researcher at Universidad Centroamericana Jose Simeón Cañas**



The Diploma has changed my life. The classes have been ultra-practical and empowering. I now have real tools that I can implement in my work as a university researcher and team member. I would recommend to anyone who wants to move from theorizing on how to do social innovation to actually implementing social innovation projects. I am already implementing design thinking, positive psychology, negotiation tactics, and the social enterprise business planning strategies that I learned in the courses.

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**Meghan Casey - Costa Rica, Sustainable Community Development Activist**



I enjoyed every moment of the Diploma program. Despite the pressures of running my own business and having 3 young children, I was able to make the time to do it because the information was always so relevant, positive and motivating. I highly recommend the diploma program to anyone interested in social justice or making this world a better place, or even for those interested in relearning basic life skills that facilitate a happier and more fulfilling life!

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**Laurent Roussel – Belgium (Citizen) /Canada (Residence), Social Entrepreneur at Ednco**



My dream was to start a social network that would support people who share the same human, ecological and economical values to co-create local projects, activities, or small businesses that will raise the level of individual & collective fulfilment. Every course in the Diploma helped me conceptualize this international and innovative project. I'm happy to report that my dream is now a reality! This program gave me the strong foundation, motivation and confidence to concretely develop this initiative and I couldn't be more thankful!

***Candy Cañez Diez – Philippines, Human Rights and Peacebuilding Consultant***



The UPEACE Centre for Executive Education is a nurturing environment for people to learn more of themselves, their communities and a world challenged by 21st Century issues. In this time of such uncertainty, the courses I took under the Diploma Program on Social Innovation became a constant ray of hope. The insights and companionship of both facilitators and participants assured me that even as humanity stands in one of its trying times, for as long as creativity, collaboration, empathy and integrity exist among us, our vision of a just, sustainable peaceful world will always remain within our reach.

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