

U.S. Mission to UNESCO



Ambassador Nix-Hines's Trip to Africa in support of STEAM camps, Innovation, Youth Empowerment and African Leadership

Addis Ababa – Pretoria – Johannesburg
December 2015

Among the core priorities for the U.S. Mission to UNESCO (USUNESCO) are programs aimed at advancing literacy and women and girls' education in Africa – particularly science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) education. As part of the latter focus, USUNESCO was one of the supporting partners in the first-ever [Women in Science \(WiSci\) Girls STEAM camp](#) (#WiSci2015), held in Rwanda from July 26-August 15, 2015. A partnership between the State Department, Intel, Microsoft, UN Foundation, AOL Charitable Foundation, UNESCO, and others, the pilot three week camp brought together 90 girls from eight African countries with 30 girls from the United States. You can read more about the #WiSci2015 camp [here](#) as well as find some of the girls' blog postings on [Huffington Post](#).

Following the success of #WiSci2015, we hope to expand this initiative by creating a network of similar cross-cultural STEAM camps for girls and teachers. As part of this effort, Ambassador Nix-Hines visited Ethiopia and South Africa, December 8-11, to seek out potential partners for future STEAM camps and to see first-hand some of the successful projects and programs that are operating in this space.

In Addis Ababa, on December 8, Ambassador Nix-Hines met with counterparts from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the [UNESCO Addis Ababa Liaison Office](#), and the [UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa](#) (@unescoiicba). The Ambassador enjoyed lunch with a group of women social entrepreneurs who described some of the unique challenges facing young women in Ethiopia and also visited the [Blue Nile Film and Television Academy](#) to learn more about how UNESCO and the U.S. Mission to the African Union are supporting the training of Ethiopia's next generation of media professionals (#unescojournalism).



The Ambassador shared with the Blue Nile students her own experiences of working in the entertainment industry.

Ambassador Nix-Hines and Science Officer Green visiting Blue Nile Film and Television Academy in Addis Ababa

Finally, the Ambassador met with a group of young women currently taking part in the [U.S. Embassy Addis Girls Can Code \(GCC\) program](#), including some of the Ethiopian alumnae of this year's WiSci camp. The Embassy Addis GCC program offers a select group of bright young women the opportunity to pursue computer science training each Saturday with female mentor/trainers who are currently pursuing tech-oriented studies at the university-level. One very enthusiastic participant called the program "one of the best things to have happened in my life."

In Pretoria and Johannesburg, December 9-11, Ambassador Nix-Hines engaged with a number of potential partners for a possible future STEAM camp in South Africa and met with some leading women in technology to discuss how to improve the STEAM camps program and how to engage more young women in STEAM. U.S. Embassy Pretoria hosted a reception December 9 where Ambassador Nix-Hines engaged with local [TechWomen](#) alumnae. On December 10, in addition to meeting with her counterpart at the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), Ambassador Nix-Hines also visited the [African Leadership Academy](#) (@ALAcademy) – a potential partner for future STEAM camps – where she toured the campus and had lunch with a group of student ambassadors and school administrators.



Ambassador Nix-Hines with TechWomen Alumnae in Pretoria

Ambassador Nix-Hines also met with local South African alumnae of the WiSci program to learn about their experiences and get their views on how future editions of the WiSci camp might be improved. All of the girls described their WiSci experience as "life-changing" and expressed strong desire to support future camps as counselors for other girls. On the last day of her trip on December 11, the Ambassador visited the [Gordon Institute for Business Science \(GIBS\)](#), another potential STEAM camps partner, where senior faculty shared ideas with the Ambassador on current and future programming designed to promote the next generation of women entrepreneurs across Africa.



Gift statue of Martin Luther King offered by First Lady Michelle Obama to Nelson Mandela in 2011

Following a private tour of Nelson Mandela's archives at the [Nelson Mandela Foundation](#), the Ambassador visited the [University of Pretoria](#) and the [Innovation Hub](#), a South African government-supported business incubator for technology start-ups, where she met with some of the leading women at the Innovation Hub who are helping to support and develop South Africa's next generation of women tech entrepreneurs. Ambassador Nix-Hines wrapped up her trip by meeting with the Deputy Director-General of the South African Department of Science and Technology.