



Art, Media and Youth Entrepreneurship

IAF grantees from two NGOs in Argentina and El Salvador participated in Making Cents International's Global Youth Enterprise Conference held September 15 – 16, 2008 in Washington, DC. Making Cents brought together 350 young adults and development professionals to network and share promising practices, innovative ideas, and experiences related to youth enterprise, employment and livelihood development around the world. The IAF sponsored the conference participation of four dynamic young adults who have distinguished themselves in their communities and who presented their work at the session, "Atención: Transforming Art into Enterprise." They demonstrated how art and communications further social inclusion and promote micro-enterprise development. The two cases illustrate how young adults can parlay leadership and technical skills in art and media into income-generating options in their communities.

In the interactive session photographers from Fundación ph15 para las Artes (ph15), Nahuel Alfonso and Angel Alfonso, asked three audience participants to critique photographs taken by ph15's students. ph15 trains young people from the disadvantaged neighborhood of Ciudad Oculta in Buenos Aires in photography as a technical medium and as a way to express their daily struggles. They also spoke of the training program for graduates in micro-enterprise development that ph15 is carrying out with the support of IAF funding; the idea is to offer their photography skills as services to neighborhood residents and businesses.

Paty Rivera and Berty Rivas have worked with IAF grantee, Comité de Reconstrucción y Desarrollo Económico-Social de Comunidades de Suchitoto (CRC) to strengthen alternative media, capture and disseminate the history of Suchitoto, and offer skills and leadership training for youth in radio and TV scripting and museum programming. Paty showcased her skills by conducting a simulation of a live program of Radio Suchitlán and Berty spoke about plans to use their new skills to launch income-generating initiatives.

In addition to the conference, the grantees participated in an exchange with two grassroots organizations in Southeast Washington, DC. Visions to Peace, a teen-led organization, mobilizes residents to reduce violence and promote safety and peace in Anacostia. The Youth Education Alliance (YEA), which supports educational reform by using petitions, public testimony and media production, also participated in the exchange. During the visit, IAF grantees and staff toured Berry Farms, a low-income public housing project. In a round table discussion the group identified routine problems that young people face in low-income neighborhoods in the US and Latin America, including access to adequate housing, structural conditions and violence in public schools and community relationships with police.

In one afternoon, young people from different cultures made an attempt to understand one another through the language of common experience, art and hope. The group showed

enthusiasm while viewing ph15's portraits and, as a result of the exchange, Visions is exploring options to sell its artwork and initiate photography activities.

The trip for the grantees culminated in a visit to WPFW, a community-based radio station with over 180,000 listeners in the Washington, DC area. Shani O'Neal, host of the show "Blackademics" asked Berty and Paty about their work to promote post-conflict peace in El Salvador through radio. Nahuel summarized ph15's view that art belongs to all groups regardless of their economic background and demonstrated that, through their work, they are leading by example.

Gabriela Boyer, Seth Jesse and Zakiya Johnson – Inter-American Foundation Representatives

The Inter-American Foundation (IAF) is an independent agency of the United States government that funds the self-help efforts of grassroots groups in Latin America and the Caribbean to improve living conditions of the disadvantaged and the excluded, enhance their capacity for decision-making and self-governance, and develop partnerships with the public sector, business and civil society. **The IAF invites proposals for its grant program.** The IAF does not identify problems or suggest projects; instead it responds to initiatives presented. For more information and to apply for a grant, please visit http://www.iaf.gov/grants/apply_grant_en.asp?grant=4