Rehearsing Change: Empowering Locally, Educating Globally

Puyo and surrounding areas, Ecuador

Rehearsing Change: Empowering Locally, Educating Globally

Daniel Bryan

Year Founded:
2013

Organization type:
nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Project Stage:
Start-Up

Budget:
$50,000 - $100,000

Website:
http://www.pachaysana.org

Facebook:
http://www.facebook.com/rehearsingchange

- Arts & culture
- Community development
- Intercultural relations
- Education

Project Summary

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

We apply the potential of study abroad to community-based leadership-training programs for both local and international change agents. Set in the Ecuadorian Amazon, participants live and study together, working with teaching artists to practice innovative responses to development challenges.

WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"

What if local communities in developing nations could receive equal educational benefit from the millions of dollars spent each year on study ab

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Ecuador’s wealth comes from the Amazon region, but 40% in the area live in extreme poverty and it has the highest illiteracy/drop-out rates in the nation. Education focuses on memorization; locals lack opportunities in creative learning that provides knowledge/skills to face their new
global reality. Results are serious: mass migration & violence. Additionally, international students are desperate to apply their study abroad to meaningful change.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

Our program applies study abroad’s abundant resources, including its passionate students, to the educational needs of local communities. This is Fair-Trade Learning: for each international student who participates, a local counterpart partakes in the same program. We create a “safe space” where each participant’s immediate needs are met, allowing them the freedom to practice innovation. We innovate through a Performing Arts-based methodology, which practices our skills in creative problem-solving & multicultural communication, connecting to our innate sense of play. We turn our play into real-life, small-scale community development projects, resulting in the empowerment of local leaders from rural, indigenous & youth communities.

Impact: How does it work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

26-year old Vicente is from the Kichwa community of Tzawata. A foreign mining company gained the legal rights to his ancestral lands. He was angry, but admittedly lacked knowledge of the Amazon’s globalized reality and the skills needed to transform such passion into leadership. Vicente was suspicious of foreigners, but also realized that he needed to find ways to communicate his people’s struggle. With the facilitation of teaching artists & faculty, he worked with 3 other locals & 4 international students, converting arts into development projects, ranging from theatrical events to creating youth groups to small-scale infrastructure. Vicente now leads an organized community effort with international support to regain his community’s lands.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

Evaluations indicate significant impact for locals: increased global awareness, self-esteem, & communication skills; and that our focus on play makes it easier to learn, as it closely resembles native educational practices. For international students, there is a greater respect of how industrialized nations impact communities in the developing world, and an increased motivation to work for change. Host communities report that our programming promotes greater unity & motivation for the community-at-large. Our program provides up to 48 participants per year with knowledge, skills & experience in leadership, multicultural communication, conflict transformation & project design/execution/evaluation, all of which are necessary for managing life in a globalized society, yet not provided by the existing educational structures. Plus, resulting projects serve 500 local beneficiaries per year.

Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?

The full impact is in our model, Fair-Trade Learning through participatory arts, which we are developing for replication in Ecuador and abroad. For the model to expand, we focus on partnership building by personal visits to dozens of international colleges and attending key conferences, which has led to formal relationships with top institutions, such as Brown, Brandeis & American universities. Multiplication requires that we document and evaluate all of our processes for research and development. Most importantly, we remain focused on local impact & seek constant input from community partners.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution’s plan to ensure financial sustainability?

International student tuition/fees pay for all operating costs. To enable growth and encourage further innovation, we also offer contracted consultancies to other organizations, apply for grants to carry out specific projects, sell our developed methodologies (written manuals, videos, etc), promote sustainable tourism/volunteerism with community partners, and seek tax-deductible donations, through a 501c(3) partnering organization in the USA.

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

We differ greatly from the marketplace, because we link two worlds, community development and international education, so that each contributes to solving the problems of the other. NGO’s and governments work with communities in the Amazon; however, their effort lacks investment in building social capital. Some study abroad providers offer visits to local Amazon communities; however, there are two conflicts: “giving” to the communities results in dependency on study abroad, which is not sustainable, and the providers are exclusively focused on providing services to their clients, the students.

Team

Founding Story

As a country director of a study abroad program, I had taken my students to the Amazon region. While leading a half-day workshop between my students and members of a small Amazon community, the “aha” moment hit me, “how might we change the lives of all involved if we converted these amazing 4 hours into 4 months?” On the bus ride home, I reflected on 13 years of varied experiences in community development, higher education and the arts, pulling from my time as a Peace Corps volunteer, Fulbright Scholar, university professor and workshop facilitator. Upon arriving home, I called community development specialist Belén Noroña and within a few weeks had invited top scholars, artists and activists to start Rehearsing Change.

Team

Full Time: Belén Noroña, Co-Founder & Co-Director, a specialist in community development with a Masters degree and 15 years of experience in community-based tourism & education. Juan Kunchikuy, Co-Founder & Community Education Coordinator, a native of the Amazon with fluency in 4 languages & 20 years of experience in tourism and education. Part-Time: Javier Cevallos, artist, administrator & instructor with 5 years
experience directing an NGO.

About You
Organization:
Pachaysana Institute

First Name
Daniel

Last Name
Bryan

Twitter URL
Facebook URL
http://www.facebook.com/pachaysana

About Your Project
Organization Name
Pachaysana Institute

How long has your organization been operating?

Project
Organization Country
, Quito

Country where this project is creating social impact
, Puyo and surrounding areas

What awards or honors has the project received?
Funding: How is your project financially supported?
Foundations, NGOs, Customers.

Supplemental
Awards
As we are in the start up phase, we have not yet won awards. That being said, we have been recognized by three top universities (Brown, American and Brandeis Universities) for excellence in educational programming, and they have approved our project for their students’ participation. The premier university of Ecuador, Universidad San Francisco de Quito, has also named us one of their projects of excellence.

Primary Target Age Group
18 - 35.

Your role in Education
Administrator, Teacher, Other.

Please specify which of the following best applies:
I am applying on behalf of a particular program or initiative.

The type of school(s) your solution is affiliated with (if applicable)
Public (tuition-free), Private (tuition-based).

Intervention Focus
Curricular, Extracurricular, Community.

Does your project utilize any of the innovative design principles below?
Actively Designing Space & Culture as Essential Elements for Learning: Creating cost-effective methods to infuse a school with habits, language, and materials needed for learning through play.

Is your project targeted at solving any of the following key barriers?
Lack of structures to facilitate meaningful community ownership in learning process: It is challenging to ensure parents and the broader community are involved as full co-owners in the learning process.

Need
We look for University partners who, by enacting in our educational programming, support our community empowerment projects.
Changemakers. together in dozens of communities around the world, all of whom are reimagining learning, that by first ”rehearsing change” they can truly become learning is contagious, for it is defined by our most human characteristic: the creation & telling of stories. We see local & global agents working We envision a new way of multicultural learning, where local communities feel like real actors in the global education system. This new way of what will it have achieved?

VISION: If you had unlimited funding, and you could fast forward 15 years to when your program has been able to achieve wild success -

PROGRAM DESIGN CLARITY: We are hungry to know more about what exactly your model consists of. Please succinctly list a) what main activities are you doing with your beneficiaries, b) where you carry out the activities? c) how often? d) for how many hours? e) who delivers the services? and f) any other brief details

A) Activities are linked to a 4-month program schedule: 1. Daily workshops utilizing theatre, dance & storytelling, focused on building skills in observation/reflection, contextualization, composition & expression of stories as a means of education & empowerment; 2. Theory-based multicultural group discussions that link “play” to the context of local & global development; 3. Multicultural community visits, where participants expand their horizons by sharing their stories with others. B) In the host community; rural villages in the Amazon Region of Ecuador; both indigenous & "campesino" communities; ranging from 150 to 400 inhabitants. C & D) 4 hours per day, 6 days a week, over a period of 4 months; it repeats in new communities each Jan to April and August to November. E) By our faculty, including leading international & Ecuadorian teaching artists, who can be accessed via our website.

INSPIRATION: What do you consider the most important trends or evidence that inspire you to believe the world is ready to Re-imagine Learning? Please elaborate.

With relation to “reimagining learning” in our fields of theatre & study abroad, data shows the recent economic recession did not affect study abroad enrollment. Students crave international experience, as well as meaningful community interaction, clearly shown by a rapid increase in Community Engagement and Service Learning programs. Also, while many arts programs struggle to increase enrollment & gain funds, Theatre for Social Change can be found penetrating communities around the world. Reimagining learning, for us, is when art and play reach across cultures to develop diverse Changemakers.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY: What does “learning through play” mean to you and why it is a must-have, instead of a nice to have?

Humans have been referred to as “the Storytelling Animal,” for we crave ‘Neverland’ as much as we crave food and shelter. As children, we spend as much time exploring our imaginations as we do exploring the real world. Research shows that youth who engage the imagination as an integral part of their education learn more effectively than others. Yet, as we move toward adulthood, the focus on learning through play diminishes, and we become consumers of play (TV, Movies, etc). We can integrate play into high level curricula through its inherent link to our need for creating & expressing stories.

SUSTAINABILITY: Please list a quick breakdown of your funding, indicating the percentage that comes from each source.

Tuition and Fees from International Students (80%) – Rehearsing Change is financed through the funds we collect from international students who participate in this credit-bearing program. Consultancies and Workshops (10%) by our faculty and staff. Donations (5%) and Grants (5%)

MODEL: How does your mission relate to your business model (i.e. Non-profit, for-profit or hybrid)?

Our mission is focused on the creation of new learning models, ones that can be studied for replication & multiplication. It relates directly to our NGO business model, which emphasizes expansion as opposed to growth. We employ strategic partnerships (see below) to expand the model to other places, thus expanding the education potential without overwhelming a given community with program growth, which can jeopardize integrity & create dependency.

FUNDING PRIORITIES: If your organization were given $20K in unrestricted funding today, how would you use it? Why?

Expand our project fund. Our participants are given funds to create projects, which can be the beginnings of micro-enterprise or an artistic/storytelling venture. They work with our project specialist & community leadership, to design/administer/evaluate a project to benefit the community-at-large.

PARTNERSHIPS: Tell us about your partnerships that enhance your approach.

Local communities work with us for 1-2 years before starting the program, making sure they are prepared & their decisions are well-informed. We work with the top university in Ecuador to emit transcripts & certificates, and high quality international universities (American, Brandeis, Brown) to guarantee the best possible international participants. We are newly partnered with an international NGO to research expansion to other countries.

COLLABORATIONS: Have you considered or initiated partnerships with any of the other Challenge Pacesetters? If so, please share.

We currently have an intern assigned to researching potential collaborations. While in communication with several projects, we have not yet begun to consider partnerships.

VISION: If you had unlimited funding, and you could fast forward 15 years to when your program has been able to achieve wild success - what will it have achieved?

We envision a new way of multicultural learning, where local communities feel like real actors in the global education system. This new way of learning is contagious, for it is defined by our most human characteristic: the creation & telling of stories. We see local & global agents working together in dozens of communities around the world, all of whom are reimagining learning, that by first “rehearsing change” they can truly become Changemakers.
IMPACT - KEY METRICS: Please list the key data points that you would cite as evidence that you are able to achieve lasting learning outcomes. Please also share one data point for which you most hope to see better results over time.

Data to date is mostly qualitative, from questionnaires & interviews. For locals: greater levels of self-esteem (70% indicate); the ability to plan, carry-out & evaluate small-scale community projects; & extensively higher global awareness (100% indicate). For internationals, 100% continue with “high levels” of community engagement after program. We must find ways to maintain the connection between the participants to continue joint change-making.

IMPACT - REPORTING SAMPLE: Please attach any examples of your impact reporting. [optional]:

RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE: Please link or attach any research or evidence resource you are open to sharing more widely [optional]. Building research and evidence is a key aim of this initiative, and the resources you share may be chosen for listing in the Center for Education Innovations library:

SOURCE: If applicable - who created the research or evidence you are choosing to share? :

IMPACT - REACH: How many people did your project directly engage in programmatic activities in the last year?

0 to 500

STUDY: Has an external evaluation or study been conducted of your organization?

No

Other (please specify)

Number of Employees:

Fewer than 10

Number of Volunteers:

Fewer than 10

APPROACHES: Given the complexity of play, it is not surprising that there have been numerous research attempts to categorize the different types and approaches! Please indicate which of the following your project focuses on.

Symbolic Play, Pretence/ Socio-Dramatic Play, Educational Structuring (developing playful projects within educational contexts).

Other (please specify)

AFFILIATION: Please specify if your organization has any existing affiliations with the LEGO Group.

NO

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/play2learn/entries/rehearsing-change