

SERES: Unleashing youth leadership to accelerate actions towards a sustainable future.

San Juan del Obispo, Guatemala Guatemala



Corrina Grace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rp6dvOxRL9w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sgkc8QIPDs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nhTBf02atQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBtr09BSisA>



Year Founded:
2009

Organization type:

nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Project Stage:

Established

Budget:

\$100,000 - \$250,000

Website:

<http://www.seres.org>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/SERESProject>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/SERES-294182813750/>



- [Youth leadership](#)
- [Sustainable development](#)
- [Climate change](#)
- [Sustainability](#)
- [Conflict resolution](#)
- [Indigenous cultures](#)
- [Citizen participation](#)
- [Conscious consumerism](#)

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

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

SERES programs inspire, mobilise and unleash youth leadership for community resilience to a changing climate. Using transformative sustainability leadership, SERES equips young people with the tools to drive change for the public good and start transforming their communities, networks and society.

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

What if every young man and woman, regardless of race, religion, economic status or class, was educated about the climate crisis, engaged as a key change maker and empowered to take action and lead the way towards a more sustainable future?

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

The modern day sustainability crisis has a generational and economic cleavage: young people coming of age at this kairos moment in human history are inheriting a world in crisis. Those from developing countries – many of which have significant youth bulges – have even greater challenges. This population is key to our success in transforming this crisis, yet all too often they are only seen as part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.

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

SERES works in the informal education sector with at-risk youth on the front lines of climate change. Through transformative sustainability leadership programs, SERES provides empowering opportunities for youth to lead the transition towards a more peaceful, just and thriving future. The programs engage with "unlikely leaders", seeking to simultaneously galvanise the potential of the youth bulge and create new socio-ecologically minded change agents that are working to transform their communities and society at large. Communities with active SERES youth are more informed about climate change, implementing youth-driven change processes and using peace-building strategies to engage other community members and move towards a better tomorrow.

Awards

- Energy Globe Award for Youth, Guatemala 2014 • UNESCO-Japan prize on Education for Sustainable Development, 2015

Impact: How does it Work

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

In 2013, Esteban Salcoxot, a young Quiché man from rural Guatemala, found SERES. In one year, he worked his way through all of the training programs, to become a certified facilitator. That year, he was also elected mayor of his village. His priorities were reforestation, protection of natural resources and youth leadership. Esteban is a role model for hundreds of other young Guatemalans. He has been responsible for numerous youth-led initiatives in and around Quetzaltenango and is currently working on strategies to stop the privatisation of natural resources in his community. He is also a graduate of SERES inaugural Fellowship program. This is Esteban's story (up to 2014): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sgkc8QIPDs>

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

SERES has trained over 2,500 youth leaders. Our programs have inspired hundreds of local climate actions to reduce ecological footprint, change unsustainable practices and make communities healthier and more resilient. We have also trained 79 facilitators, 29 of which are certified Ambassadors. These youth, equipped with the skills, attitudes and values to allow them to be powerful and effective transformative change agents, are working with us to scale up. SERES has also developed a partnership with the University of California, Irvine to help UCI fulfil its mandate of making sustainability and climate neutrality a part of the educational experience for all students. Over the next 5 yrs, our goal is to build an international training center for youth sustainability leadership and learning; to train 100 certified facilitators by 2018 and create a core of 7,000 youth leaders by 2020.

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

- Build the Communitarity to train young leaders from diverse backgrounds;
- Run a training program with the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) to provide system wide training programs across the ten Californian campuses;
- Work with UNESCO's ESD partner network to develop a flagship program for empowering and mobilising youth based on SERES work;
- Cross-pollination, research & development with strategically selected regional partners to review models of sustainability education, transformative leadership and change-maker programs, find best practices and scale up;

Sustainability

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

SERES has a four-pronged approach to ensuring financial sustainability through a diversified income stream: 1. Market Positioning and Branding: being a leader in providing sustainability education that inspires action to address the climate crisis 2. Consulting and Training: increasing opportunities to provide tailor-designed programs and trainings 3. Communitarity: a social enterprise model 4. Ambassador Program: train-the-trainers model

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

Our work draws upon tools and practices from multiple sources, including appreciative inquiry, strategic questioning, social transformation and movement strategy work. However through our years of program development we found many important and impactful programs addressing youth leadership and sustainability education, but none that has the unique, holistic approach that SERES uses. One of the strengths of SERES' program is that we use a leadership lens to address sustainability education, where leadership is a verb - requiring participants to act to address their biggest concerns.

Team

Founding Story

In 2009, a young Australian mechanical engineer met a young El Salvadorian subsistence farmer. As Corrina listened to Antonio talk about his concerns about climate change, she realised something: that sustainability is a rich man's luxury, and a poor man's obligation. Corrina decided then that she would dedicate herself to helping Antonio be all he could be in his dreams to make his community more sustainable. Corrina started helping Antonio to address climate issues in his community. In 2010, they decided to host a youth climate congress, where they discovered how powerful youth could be with their ideas, energy and passion for change. This congress was the beginning of SERES.

Team

SERES is a proudly youth-led organisation with 8 FTEs and 3 PTEs all of whom (with the exception of the co-founder) are local youth leaders. Half of the team (our youth facilitators) are young people who have themselves come through the SERES leadership programs and are now inspiring role models for other young people. The remaining team members provide support and administrative roles, coming from backgrounds where they had greater access to formal education and who hold university degrees or equivalent. The SERES leadership team consists of two boards: the local association board has elected representatives from SERES youth ambassadors as well as members from the indigenous community, business leaders and prominent leading families. Our SERES Global board consists of professionals that are able to provide additional advisory roles such as legal counsel, not-for-profit advice and educational curriculum. We are in a constant process of actively recruiting board members both locally and globally as we identify needed areas of expertise.

Background

Please confirm how you heard about the Unilever Awards:

Via Twitter

Please confirm your role in the initiative (eg Founder/co-Founder) and your organisational title:

co-Founder, Executive Director

Which of the 8 UN Global Goals (Sustainable Development Goals) pre-selected for this competition does your solution relate most closely to? [select all that apply]

Climate Action.

Leadership and the Unilever Awards

Please provide examples of any previous entrepreneurial initiatives you have pioneered.

Beyond your existing team, who else are you working with to achieve your objectives, eg partners, advisors, mentors?

- UNESCO ESD Partners GAP network
- the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace and Sustainable Development
- Sustainability Initiative, University of California, Irvine
- University of California, Office of the President
- Journeyman International
- Aspen Global Leadership Network
- Central American Leadership Network

Source URL: <https://www.changemakers.com/globalgoals2015/entries/seres>