

Cultural Summer: Gaining Entrepreneurship & Professional Skills
Cativá, Panama
Pomona College
Valentina Liberman, Brazil, Pomona College
Sara Garza Gonzalez, Mexico, Pomona College
Dates: July 9 - August 6

Background

In Panama, 26% of girls are married before the age of 18 and 15% of all pregnancies were brought to term by girls below the age of 20. 26.1% of girls drop out of school between primary (ages 6-11) and secondary school (ages 12-17). Child marriage, teen pregnancy, and school dropout are risks faced by much of the Panamanian youth, and girls in the Kuna community are at high risk.

Grande Sueños (Big Dreams Project) began in 2020 to help 30 at-risk girls who live in conditions of education and social vulnerability in the village of the Kuna Community in Cativá (Province of Colón), Panamá. The program has cross-sectional interventions and longitudinal follow-up aimed at 30 girls between the ages of 12 and 17. The main objective is to assist the girls in creating and executing a life plan to overcome the social, emotional, and educational factors that influence adolescent pregnancy and school dropout. Currently, the three main focuses of the projects have been:

- Strengthen the academic performance of the participants
- Promote self-knowledge, self-assessment, and self-care
- Promote the sense of belonging to a social group

To strengthen their academic performance, the girls receive 4 tutoring sessions per week after school. These sessions have the personal accompaniment of a tutor to carry out tasks and focus on reinforcing skills such as motivation for self-learning, time management, recognition of one's own learning style, study methods, and digital literacy.

Project Overview

In the past, "Big Dreams" has also provided workshops and talks led by professionals in fields stemming from indigenous artists to congresswomen. The psychologists who work with the girls have reported positive changes in their behavior soon and long after these conferences. When speaking to the girls about their needs, the most common request was more exposure to these professionals who were once in a similar socio-economic position as them. Currently, the project's budget has been aimed solely towards providing meals and tutoring, which means that these talks and other cultural experiences have been limited. Hence, we want them to have more of these experiences that promote a sense of belonging and encourage acceptance, empathy, solidarity, and community participation. We have planned a diverse range of cultural activities which include: bringing guest speakers, taking a day trip to visit the speakers workplace, crafts workshops, visiting a farm and learning about agriculture, going to museums and theaters (Museo de la Mola and Teatro Amador), and a sports day. Moreover, before arriving in Cativá, Panama, we plan to virtually meet several times with the girls in order to get to know each other better. Although Valentina is already pretty familiar with the project and the Kuna Community, we believe it is necessary for Sara to become acquainted as well because we value reciprocal, lasting relationships. The last thing we want to do is impose a social service that is not needed or desired.

Simultaneously, we want to work with their mothers to sell their handcrafts by creating partnerships with local artisanal markets. As of now, none of the mothers of the 30 participants have any form of income but they have expressed interest in selling their crafts. The mothers do not have the means to purchase the necessary materials to begin making handicrafts, and therefore our project would

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assist them by funding the initial capital. We will also be placing them in contact with local artisanal markets, located in some of the biggest tourist destinations in the country, to sell their work. Additionally, we will supply the transportation needed for the sales since there is a greater tourist market in neighboring towns (i.e. cruises stop in those towns).

Before we arrive in Cativa, we want to work virtually on the building of entrepreneurship skills of both mothers and daughters through online courses. Since Big Dreams already provides each girl with a tablet and internet connection, we believe we need to take advantage of this resource and provide entrepreneurship virtual courses to get them familiar with the subject, weeks before our arrival. Once we arrive, we will invite guest speakers who now work in self-made businesses and who were once in similar, precarious circumstances to speak to the girls. The workshops provided will be led by professionals in the field to help the mothers build a sustainable business model in which their micro-economies can prosper.

Supporting the girls in overcoming the many challenges within their community requires a holistic approach. By working together with the mothers and the daughters, we aim to provide an opportunity to create some stability in their homes while incentivizing independence and entrepreneurship. Overall, the purpose of this continuous project is to stimulate self-knowledge, socialization, expressiveness, communication, and introspection. To further connect both the mothers and daughters, we would run bonding workshops in a space owned by Big Dreams, where the mothers teach daughters about their crafts and other traditions that cultivate creative activities.

Present & Futurity

Week 1: Community-building activities and Entrepreneurship Workshop (online course and in-person with the curriculum developed by the psychologists and guest speakers)

Week 2-4: Buy materials so the craft making and artisan business-creation can begin (workshops for product building).

Field trips planned for the girls: Museo de La Mola (Indigenous museum); Day trip to guest speakers workplace; Teatro Amador (historic theater)

Follow-ups: Survey girls' overall opinions and suggestions; Zoom meetings to continue fostering a sense of community; monitor the mothers' business sales and their various needs that may arise

About the authors

Valentina has worked with Grande Sueños since the beginning of the project, but her involvement with community building began years ago. She has worked to reduce inequality by improving public parks and helped women in a small *favela* in São Paulo generate income through sewing. Valentina hopes to bring what she has learned from these past projects and help the Big Dreams Project continue and expand its purpose.

Sara has experience working with girls aged 12-17 in her community of Tampico, Mexico. She volunteered at a girls' shelter where she coordinated activities, such as playing sports, doing crafts, and sharing stories to foster empathy. Additionally, she created and sold crafts to buy the supplies needed for organizing monthly beach cleanups.

Name: Valentina Liberman & Sara Garza Gonzalez					Note: all funds in US dollars.				
Project Name: Cultural Summer: Gaining Entrepreneurship & Professional Skills							**HALF OF THE FUNDS REMAINING WILL BE USED TO CONTINUE BUYING THE MATERIALS NEEDED FOR THE ARTISAN MARKET, AND THE OTHER HALF WILL BE STORED WITH THE NGO FOR FUTURE INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKERS (WHICH WE WOULD ALL AGREE TO AND WOULD BE PART OF DECIDING HOW THE MONEY IS USED)		
School: Pomona College					TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING:				
					\$ 2,800.00				
Projects for Peace grant:		\$ 10,000.00			TOTAL EXPENDITURES:				
Additional Funding, if any:					\$ 7,200.00				
Total funding available:		\$ 10,000.00							
Student Expenses					Project Expenses				
Travel (Including Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food (Biweekly)	Miscellaneous	Non-Student Travel and Lodging	Direct Equipment and Supplies	Marketing and Event Support	Staffing Costs	Miscellaneous
\$1,400	\$0	\$100	\$200	\$300	\$600	\$3,500	\$400	\$0	\$700
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
\$ 1,400.00	\$ -	\$ 100.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 300.00	\$ 600.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 400.00	\$ -	\$ 700.00
**Sara is flying from LAX to Panama, and then from Panama to her hometown // Valentina is flying from Sao Paulo to Panama and from Panama to Sao Paulo	**We are staying with Valentina's dad, so no lodging expenses	**SIM CARDS FOR INTERNET	**GROCERIES				**Food and Beverages	**All Staff Costs are being donated	*Sports day, tickets and entry to cultural activities,
Total Student Expenses:		\$ 2,000.00			Total Project Expenses:		\$ 5,200.00		