



U.S. State Department & SIF Join Forces to Train Central American Women Leaders

Participants in Seattle: July 23-27, 2012

Participants in D.C.: July 28-August 2, 2012

The U.S. State Department (through the Secretary's Office for Global Women's Issues - S/GWI) and the Seattle International Foundation (SIF), are offering an opportunity for Central American women working on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to receive extensive training in Seattle, WA and Washington D.C. this summer.

The goals of this program include:

- Identify and empower a new generation of women leaders from the region
- Create international links amongst the U.S. violence prevention movement and public policy sector
- Provide these women leaders with the tools, networks and personal leadership development necessary for their success
- Increase their impact in preventing, addressing and responding to SGBV in their respective communities throughout Central America

To learn more about this partnership and the full program itinerary, [please click here](#).

Please see below for further information on each participant. If you have questions about this program, or would be interested in hosting a woman leader in your home or place of work, please contact Michele Frix at mfrix@seaif.org or 206-547-9335.



El Salvador

Laura Marcela Rodriguez Osorio

Laura currently serves as the Director of Violence Prevention for the Solidarity Leaders Association, an NGO with the goal of implementing and supporting campaigns to prevent juvenile delinquency, sexually transmitted diseases and gender-based violence. She is committed to creating generational change regarding the economic, social and political rights of Salvadoran youth. Laura is also building partnerships among NGOs, nonprofit organizations and private companies in order to increase the social impact of programs benefitting young people in her community. Laura is currently pursuing a BA in psychology.

Deysi Karina Espinoza

Deysi would like to pursue a career as a social advocate in the communications field, specifically radio. She is currently studying for a BA in journalism and serves as the Deputy Coordinator of Communications at Solidarity Leaders Association, where she manages the radio program, website and other online social networks. Her work is focused on sex education and reproductive health; gender equality and sexual diversity; preventing gender-based violence; promoting volunteerism; and youth civic and political participation. Deysi is in a position of influence at Solidarity Leaders, as they plan for innovations and improvements in their online presence and communications strategy. This will be Deysi's first trip outside of El Salvador.



Guatemala

Helen Josefina Saenz

Helen is 29 years old and currently serves as the Coordinator for the Support Center for Women Survivors of Violence (CAIMU). She has seen firsthand the necessity of educating people on gender-based violence in Guatemala. She promotes a multi-pronged approach to addressing gender-based violence by incorporating psychological care, social work services, medical care and legal assistance to assist survivors in their recovery and empower them to make positive changes in their lives. Additionally, she works to build alliances with local and national organizations, as well as with community members within the health, education and justice sectors. This will be Helen's first trip to the United States.

Juana Gricelda Lorenzo Ventura

Juana is 28 years old and of Maya K'iche descent. She works with indigenous women's organizations in the health and nutrition sectors. She has already made a great impact on the indigenous communities where she lives and works by teaching and men and women about their reproductive rights. Juana is currently a social worker in the USAID reproductive rights project where she works regularly with the Ministry of Health, educating community members about their health-related rights. She was also active during the 2011 Guatemalan election season, educated indigenous communities on the election process and supported indigenous candidates. Juana has a BA in social work management with a focus on development and is strong public speaker.



Nicaragua

Shira Miguel Downes

Shira is 30 years old and of Afro-Caribbean descent, born in the indigenous community of Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua. She currently serves as the Coordinator for the *Association of Women's Movement Nidia White*, and is the driving force behind the group's gender-based violence outreach into historically marginalized indigenous communities. Nidia White is a multiethnic, regional association that promotes and protects the rights of women in the northern coast of Nicaragua, which is notorious for sub-standard access to government services, particularly in domestic violence prevention and victim rehabilitation programs. She is a dynamic women's rights leader, committed to raising awareness and assisting victims of gender violence. Shira is trained as a lawyer with post graduate studies in forensic psychology. This will be Shira's first trip to the United States.

Aleyda Gomez

Aleyda is 45 years old and from the Caribbean city of Bluefields, in the Southern Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS) of Nicaragua. She is trained as a sociologist and has more than 13 years of experience working on gender violence issues. Aleyda currently serves as the director of the radio program *Women's Voices*, a public forum to debate issues around women's rights and raised awareness about gender violence. She currently chairs the presidency of the *Caribbean Network against Gender Violence in the RAAS* and is participating member of the *Centre for Multiethnic Women's Studies*. This will be Aleyda's first trip to the United States.



Panama

Eva Chacon

Eva is 44 years old and a skilled social worker with 15 years of experience in the field. She currently works with Fundación Calicanto, one of Panama's leading NGOs serving at-risk communities. Calicanto runs vocational training programs for low-income women. Eva is responsible for visiting women in their homes to identify potential issues for their program participants, such as domestic violence, drug use and spousal abuse. She also leads trainees in personal development and self-esteem building seminars. This will be Eva's first trip to the United States.

Catherine Bethencourt

Catherine is 21 years old and a journalism student at the University of Panama. She has been promoting gender equality and HIV/AIDS awareness since the age of 16. She is a health promoter for the *How Much Do You Know about HIV/AIDS* program and is an active volunteer at *Aid for AIDS Panama*. Her work has expanded beyond HIV/AIDS awareness to include the promotion of safe and healthy living, with a gender focus, in Panama and throughout Central America.



Honduras

Ada Lastenia Flores Garcia

Lastenia is 43 years old and currently serves as the Sector Coordinator at Organismo Crisitiano de Desarrollo Integral de Honduras (OCDIH). She has over eight years of experience working with local women's networks in defending women's rights, specifically addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). As Sector Coordinator, Lastenia helps women's groups in defining an advocacy strategy on domestic violence and assists them in navigating the judicial system with regard to domestic violence and equal opportunity. She is also working to establish a municipal policy against SGBV, as well as supporting the creation of women's offices within local government. Additionally, she is a driving force in a national femicide awareness campaign, which has been created in response to the alarming rates of female murders in Honduras. This will be Lastenia's first trip to the United States.

Berta Alicia Hernandez

Berta is 42 years old and of Maya Chorti decent, born in the indigenous community of Montes Los Negros, Honduras. She is an active advocate of indigenous women's rights and currently serves as the Head Counselor of the National Maya Chorti Women's Council. As the top leader of the Maya Chorti women, Berta focuses her attention on achieving gender equality and establishing community development projects that will particularly benefit women. Additionally, she serves on the Regional Council of Indigenous Women and actively participates in women's alliance organizations in the towns of Copan Ruinas, Copan Santa Rita, and Cabanas. Through her advocacy work, Berta strives for indigenous women's rights to be recognized and enforced on local, state, and international levels. This will be Berta's first trip to the United States.