



GIRLS FOR THE WORLD

SUMMER UPDATE 2015



"Every day I talk about the program with my daughter and my family and my neighbors. I do not forget any time."

We are grateful to you, our circle of friends and supporters, for your commitment to making a difference in the world. Your sensitivity to the challenges faced by girls and women around the world and the gifts you have shared in support of our work are creating change in Peru, India, Haiti, and in the United States.

The impact you are making is significant and we ask for your continued support. Our programs build community and sanctuary through which girls and moms have the opportunity to discover their value and worth. They find their strength and their voices, and use them, to speak up, to start school or skills training, or to delay marriage.

We invite you into our recent workshops through this newsletter. As you will read and can see in these photos, profound depression yields to hope and confidence in those who participate.

Thank you for walking this journey with us... a journey of compassion and solidarity, of learning and teaching, and of sharing our lives and experiences.

*Karen M. Hanson
Executive Director*

New Program Shifts Mother-Daughter Relationships

After many requests, GFW initiated two mothers' programs in India this spring. The mothers wanted to more fully understand what the girls were experiencing as a result of the workshops, as well as learn to support their daughters in their newfound strength.

Even this desire to understand and support shows a shift in both mindset and action. In many of these families, daughters are largely ignored and often seen as burdens. Girls' primary role is to care for the house and do work for the family.

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GFW: Solidarity Amongst Shipibo Women

by India Banks of Alianza Arkana

Alianza Arkana has joined forces for the third year in a row with Girls for the World and Shipibo Joi to create an extraordinary week for 16 Shipibo girls from Bena Jema: a rundown, urban indigenous community on the mainland near Yarinacocha in the Peruvian Amazon. As one local resident said, "I'm so happy you are working with the Bena Jema girls on something like this. Bena Jema tends to be ignored. It's the place where people tend to go to buy things cheaply at the market and sell on for higher prices in the more popular communities. It's not really charming or pretty and lives there are really tough."

We arrived on a colectivo bright and early to be greeted by a gaggle of smiles and hugs and an excited buzz. Tierra Vida would be our stomping ground for the next 6 days, a beautiful healing centre buried away on its own island in a luscious patch of forest. We were going to be well looked after, the chefs for the week had already cooked up a fine Chapo breakfast, the girls' favourite (boiled banana soup), which we ate after exploring the paths lined with fresh cacao trees and many medicinal plants.

We all headed to the maloka where we would be hard at work and play



for the coming days, and began with introductions, games, and Karen of Girls for the World deftly and gracefully establishing a safe circle that would enable so much to come up during the workshop week. The circle is a symbol for support, for seeing and being seen by everybody, for equality.

Most of the girls knew one another at the start of the week, but many not well. Bena Jema has a population of roughly 2000 people, and there are a few different schools that the girls attend according to age, location and ability. So, there were a couple of tight friendships, some rival cliques, some that knew one another in passing, or as friends of siblings. The girls here ranged in age from 12 to 18, most being between 14 and 16. There were also three mothers in the workshops: a nurse, teacher, and female community leader.

It was hugely valuable to have women of all ages participating—the current generation of Shipibo young people is a leap away from their parents' culture due to rapid globalization, access to internet and global media, degradation of the environment and the familiar discrimination against indigenous cultures in Peru. It seems like a

communication and cultural gulf has formed between generations, genders, and individuals. Many issues that young women face, both universal and specific to Shipibo girls, are not discussed at all. Many impacts of modernization (internet/social media, media representation, diet, climate change) that are well-versed in the west feel like they have yet to be properly identified here,



Photos From Girls





though all the forces that cause them are fully in action.

The activities that Karen has crafted in her years of running Girls For The World are a mixture of arts and crafts, physical games, writing and talking. Symbolism is a strong language that runs through all of these, the activities all gather meaning and messages generated by the girls, who quickly become the real leaders of the workshop. Karen manages to balance them in a way so that what might seem like a fun creative activity driven by instinct and intuition soon becomes valuable material for recognizing how and who we are. Cultural and

individual identity, self-worth and personal strengths were just some of the valuable lessons that every one of us participating in the workshops were able to realise. As they arose, themes were reflected on, with Shipibo facilitators and mentors Rebeca and Katy guiding the girls in their native language then translating so everybody could take part. These lessons were woven in with practical teaching and discussion about nutrition, physical and sexual health and emotional well being. We also spent an afternoon using "Forum Theatre" as a tool to play out situations that had arisen for the girls in the past weeks at home.

They took to this naturally and it enabled the girls to give one another advice through playing others' roles, including some valuable character swapping between generations.

Naturally, many sensitive issues arose and there were some challenging moments for everybody. It was these times, and the ways in which the other members of the circle embraced and supported one another, that truly built the foundations of what will now continue to be a sustainable support network for these girls.

(Excerpted from blog by India Banks of Alianza Arkana, 8 March 2015. alianzaarkana.org/media-room/bloglatest-news/categories/listings/intercultural-education)

Programs and Community Visits in India



New Mother-Daughter Relationships (from p. 1)

But when mothers began to see the changes in their daughters, they wanted to know more. The girls gladly took over their mothers' responsibilities so they could participate in this new program, which utilized a similar methodology to that of the girls. This gave the mothers the opportunity to experience for themselves some of the major shifts their daughters have made through the GFW workshops.

They appreciated the chance to take a break from the endless needs of their homes and work, their notebooks to draw reflections, and the insights they gained from the experience. But more

"We are mothers of daughters but we don't take care of our daughters. Then Karen comes and takes care of our daughters. She is a safe woman and a love woman. She works with our daughters and first time with mothers. Now we take care of our daughters the way Karen takes care of our daughters."

Bano

importantly, they learned the power of sharing their own stories – and in doing so, began to understand how their daughters' stories mirrored their own.

This program has sparked a new way of building community for themselves and their daughters, transforming how they care for each other and creating a new way of recognizing, relating to, and dignifying the girls. As one mother said, "My daughter is so different, she loves, she supports, she is powerful and confident. 'Mom you are not alone, I care for you.' My daughter is very different."

So this experience gives them the chance to see their daughters differently, which sets the foundation for them to transform their relationships and ignite a new way of treating their daughters with dignity every day.

Girls for the World is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping adolescent girls envision themselves as powerful agents of change in their lives and communities.

Help make a difference!

Your tax-deductible donation will help change a young woman's life with the remarkable transformation that comes as a result of knowing, loving and trusting oneself. Thank you for your generous support of our work!

Girls for the World
PO Box 662
Chagrin Falls, Ohio 44022
440.667.3504

info@girlsfortheworld.org
www.GirlsForTheWorld.org

Karen Hanson, Executive Director

