



# GIRLS FOR THE WORLD

## Summer Update 2013



### Girls for the World: Empowering Indigenous Girls in the Peruvian Amazon

by Amanda Garratt

Perhaps at first the above quote doesn't seem very profound. But, when 15 Shipibo teenage girls chant this phrase together in a circle, for girls who all of their lives have been discriminated against for being indigenous, for being women, and for not having economic resources, it becomes quite powerful. I was lucky enough to be a part of that circle and to be able to watch over 5 days each of those 15 girls go through a beautiful transformation.

The program, Girls for the World, is the brainchild of Karen Hanson, executive director of the US based non-profit Girls for the World. She normally holds these workshops that focus on empowerment, self-esteem and leadership with young girls in India and in the United States, but thanks to the support of our partner Mershona Parshall at Shipibo Joi, we were lucky enough to have her in Peru this year. The workshop is a 5 day sacred ceremony that in a very simple, yet effective way, teaches girls that they have a voice, that they are somebody, and that they are leaders.

On the first day, the girls were quiet. They made little eye contact, and blushed when they were asked to speak. On this day, we discussed the role of circles (family, community, school, city, etc) and how our circles influence us and send us messages that don't necessarily fit us. Karen passed out large, clown sunglasses to each girl to symbolize messages from our circles that don't fit us. As the girls talked about going to the city of Pucallpa and being called dirty for being indigenous, they had to wear these sunglasses that were hard to see through and hurt their heads. Then, Karen asked them to take off those glasses and see themselves through their own eyes.

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### GFW Workshop Participants To Start Community Bakery



As a result of our workshop in February, our Girls for the World circle in the Peruvian Amazon built an oven, with help from community members and Alianza Arkana. The girls are planning to start a bakery in their community of San Francisco since the nearest one is an hour's boat ride away. Truly, the ripple effect of what the girls experience in this program is creating change in their families and in their communities.



## Laurel Middle Schoolers Enjoy End of Year Girls for the World Retreat

We had a wonderful time with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade girls at Laurel School in Shaker Heights, Ohio, at their end-of-year Girls for the World retreat!

During our four days together, we learned about and discussed the lives and issues of girls in various parts of the world. After experimenting with putting themselves in their shoes, the Laurel girls brainstormed ways of being in solidarity with girls around the world.

We also had fun sharing, painting, drumming, exploring and discovering ourselves and our own unique voices and gifts! The girls have a greater understanding of themselves and others and the ways they can impact the world. After the workshop, each girl shared what she will most remember from her experience. One girl marveled, "I feel like I was put into a blender, mixed up, and came out a different person! I'm so excited to learn more about myself!"

We will be returning in the fall for another workshop. Thanks to Laurel for inviting GFW and to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade team for all their support! Most of all, thanks to the girls! Welcome to our global circle!



# GFW IN INDIA



Girls for the World offers follow-up programs for girls who participate in our workshops. Regular meetings are held to discuss the needs of the girls as well as to offer an opportunity for the circle to come together for activities and fun! Earlier last month the girls gathered to enjoy “ice golas,” or as we know them, snowcones!

## IMPACT: Girls Return to School

The school year has begun in Western India and there will be four new faces among the many students who will be returning for the start of the new year. Girls for the World participants Nilo, Nilofar, Rahemat, and Mehrunisha had previously dropped out of school, as many poor girls do in this area.

After participating in the GFW workshops, the girls decided they wanted to continue their educations and sought permission from their parents. Often money has to be scraped together or borrowed to cover the costs of their books, fees, uniforms, and transportation.

But the girls are motivated by their newly found confidence and strength to pursue their educations. Many others wish they had the resources to do the same.

Congratulations and best of luck to Nilo, Nilofar, Rahemat, and Mehrunisha and to all of our girls for the coming year!



### Girls for the World Invited by Homes of Hope to Visit their Orphanages in South India

*GFW was invited by Homes of Hope India to spend time with the 90+ girls at one of the orphanage/boarding hostels they help to support through the Salesian Sisters in Southern India. We had a great time storytelling, beading, dancing, singing, and sharing our hopes, dreams, and plans for the future...which will include additional GFW programming!*

*For information about GFW, visit our website at [www.GirlsfortheWorld.org](http://www.GirlsfortheWorld.org). For information about Homes of Hope India, visit them at [www.homeofhopeindia.org](http://www.homeofhopeindia.org).*



The girls enjoyed our monkey theme!



## Empowering Indigenous Girls (from page1)

She taught that the messages we receive about ourselves often are through the lenses of others and about the importance of really paying attention to whether or not the messages we receive fit us as we look at ourselves with the clarity of our own vision. She talked about the necessity to create a circle that provides messages of solidarity, support and love.

On the second day, we all had to share one of our special talents. We went in a circle sharing our talents or gifts and after each girl shared, we had to repeat her talent and all of the talents before. Many of the talents were helping my mother or doing my chores, but we found a way to make each girls' gift unique and special. They then painted their gifts on a large mural, which became their Girls for the World Mural, a symbol of all of their special talents combined in one united, sacred circle. Throughout the week, we used painting, drawing, bracelet-making, hoola hooping, yoga, and other activities to enforce the ideas that they have a voice, that they are leaders, and that they are somebody.

On Thursday, we did an acting exercise in which the girls had to practice different emotions and act out a scene using those emotions. This was when I first truly realized the great change that had taken place in these girls. Had we asked them to do this activity on Monday, they would have turned red and fled the maloka, but on that day they were beautiful little actresses filled with emotion and confidence.

That night, the last night, we stayed with the girls in the maloka until late, having a dance party. First they showed us typical Shipibo dances, and then we showed them how to dance to Abba's "Dancing Queen." Then the party broke out with local cumbia and salsa. Who would have thought that those quiet, timid girls I met on Monday could break it down better than me on the dance floor?

That last day was when all of the girls chanted together loudly and proudly the above phrase, "I am Somebody. You are somebody. We are somebody," in a united, empowered circle.

It was an honor to be a part of that circle, and have the chance to get to know those 15 beautiful young women.

*(Reprinted from a blog posted by Amanda Garratt of Alianza Arkana, March 8, 2013)*

## GFW / RAPART RETREATS



*GFW conducted retreats for Cleveland's Centers for Families and Children's RapArt girls' circles. We especially appreciated the parents who joined the girls in our circle and participated with us. The girls loved the hoops and the trust game!*



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!

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