

Project: Hip Hop For Peace

Location *The project will be taking place in the historical center of Guatemala City, the Guatemalan capital. Over the last ten years Guatemala has become one of the most dangerous and violent countries in the world, today's homicide rate being even higher than during Civil War with over ten murders a day (GAM, 2009). The country's wealth is distributed in a highly inequitable manner. Guatemala's GINI is of 53.7, which is among the highest in Latin America (UNDP, 2009). Urban areas are the most heavily impacted zones and particularly Guatemala City which accounts for most of the violent crimes committed in urban context: between January and October 2010, Guatemala City was the municipality with more murders. Mixco – the municipality ranking second – presented numbers seven times lower than the capital (GAM, 2010). Poverty, discrimination, exclusion, family disintegration, low level of education and unemployment are some of the scourges responsible for the general level of violence in Guatemalan cities. The youth which represents an important share of the population – the median age in the country being of 19.7 years (CIA Factbook, 2010) – is particularly affected. However they constitute as much the victims as the perpetrators. This violent context creates an incentive for many young people to join maras (gangs) which makes them increasingly fall victims to "social cleansing". Therefore there is an urge to act towards Guatemalan urban youth in order to offer them alternatives to violent street life and new opportunities.*

The project *Our idea is to create a space where youth can develop their skills in one of the disciplines of hip hop.*

Why hip hop? At the end of the 1970s, a gang member from the Bronx (NY), Afrika Bambaataa, created the hip hop culture whose goal was to canalize violence and negative energy into something positive, namely different types of art forms. Hip hop culture is an interesting tool to work with youth for three reasons:

- 1) Hip hop is a culture based on four pillars (Peace, Unity, Love and Having Fun) and four disciplines (Rap, DJing, Break-dancing, Graffiti). The multiplicity of possibilities allows each person to find a field in which to be active whether it is singing, rapping, dancing one of the numerous styles of hip hop dance, or drawing.*
- 2) Hip hop is a culture which originally emerged in the poorest urban areas. Therefore, all of the disciplines (apart from DJing) can be practiced without any material investment needed.*
- 3) Hip hop can be considered as the voice of the voiceless. It has a legacy of denouncing social problems from poor urban areas. Consequently it can be used as a tool of sociopolitical mobilization and of awareness raising.*

Why create a Hip hop spot for urban youth of Guatemala City? Guatemalan urban centers provide very few places where young people can hang out and interact in a peaceful and constructive manner. Offering the youth a space where they can express themselves would be an alternative to spending their free time in the streets, taking the risk of being involved in gang activity. The project will be locally owned, made by and with the youth involved, with strong support of community stakeholders. Also, by implicating the youth in the managing process of the center would allow them to acquire leadership and organizational skills that can further help them in their professional project.

Over two months (July and August 2011) we will implement workshops in all four disciplines, some in collaboration with international artists, but also some workshops on human rights. Having a strong desire to make the project sustainable over time, at the end of this two-months period, the youth will present its work to representatives of local and international organizations, diplomatic missions and other potential donors in order to raise enough money to buy a local where the project could continue and expand. Every six months, the center will present its achievements to donors who will then decide

if they renew their support to the project, thus promoting accountability.

Objectives

- Create a safe public space for creation and recreation.*
- Connect young art entrepreneurs, organizations and benefactors to guarantee the funding of the project for at least 24 months.*
- Offer an alternative path away from crime and violence.*
- Develop skills of youth at risk like project management, basic computer skills, basic accounting, creative writing and music arts.*
- Empower young creators.*
- Create ties between youth and their neighborhood.*
- Encourage proactive dialogue and discussion of national and local problems.*
- Prove to the community that the youth is also able to participate in positive and constructive activities, thus reducing discrimination towards them.*

Mid-term goal

- Open a community owned and managed creative space with a diverse basket of funding, to achieve a long term impact and preserve the security and well-being of a modest group of young leaders and innovators in Guatemala City. By the end of the project we expect to obtain funding to guarantee 2 years of operations and to consolidate an Advisory Board to watch the project.

Who?

Target Group *Attention of up to 60 beneficiaries men and women between 11 and 18 years old, that live mainly in zone 1, 2 and 3 of Guatemala City. The gender perspective is of major concern to us but we are aware that young girls might be more difficult to reach. Therefore we would proceed to snowball processes of recruitment, asking others to convince girls to join the program.*

Partners ***Caja Ludica** is the local partner of the project. It is a grassroots organization which uses art to create spaces for awareness raising. They seek to build a culture of solidarity, democracy and peace through participatory transformation, integral development and promotion of self knowledge, freedom of expression, respect of people and nature, confidence, teamwork, dialogue and critical interpretation of reality. They have been working for over a decade with youth at risk both in rural and urban areas allowing they gain credibility among youth. This local partnership will help us reach our target group.*

*A group of **international experts** in different disciplines is willing to share their skills, pro bono, during phase I of the project.*

*A small team of **local volunteers** - college students from diverse backgrounds - will assist with the promotion and outreach of the project.*