

SERES
annual report

2015







In 2015 SERES ran
39 multi-day **sustainability leadership programs**,
reaching **710** young leaders
that are now igniting change
and driving multiple youth-
led initiatives in over **160**
communities in Guatemala
and El Salvador!

“ Since childhood I have identified with community organizing, leadership and participation. Through SERES I was able to integrate both LEADERSHIP and COMMUNITY to SUSTAINABILITY in an innovative way. ”

Facilitator Training Participant

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DEAR *friends*

SERES just celebrated our 7th year of doing this work, and as I reflect back on the achievements of 2015 I am reminded of the 7-year cycles of life. For SERES, 2015 was a year of validation and recognition: a humbling and at the same time satisfying closure to this first life cycle – the story of a truly grassroots initiative pioneering a new approach to education and sustainable development in Central America.

Our success with the Inter-American Foundation to secure support for 50% of our operational budget for the next three years is a significant step forward, allowing us to plan with greater confidence and clarity and to bring more training and support to the network. Our work last year with the University of California – the world’s largest public research institution – has developed into a number of different programs to be held over the next two years, including a for-credit course that we hope to offer through the University of California, Irvine’s summer school in 2017. This relationship not only helps to bridge our work between the formal and informal education sectors, it also provides us with a revenue stream outside of grants and donations that continue to support our work with youth in Guatemala and El Salvador. And, of course, one of the most memorable events for SERES in 2015: being named as one of three laureates to receive the UNESCO-Japan Prize for Education for Sustainable Development.

As we prepare ourselves for the next cycle, I am excited by what is to come. While the scope of the social, environmental and economic challenges that young people in this region face can seem daunting, I have seen firsthand the incredible passion and dedication that these inspirational, unlikely leaders are doing to address those challenges, and I am deeply committed to continuing to support them to do just that. Building on the significant success of our programs over the last 7 years, we are now looking at ways in which we can take this initiative to greater scale and impact for the next 7.

There is a lot of work to be done, but with your dedicated support we have proven that we can make a significant difference. We will continue to pioneer innovative programs, working to unleash youth leadership to build power, expand and deepen democracy, increase community voice, strengthen climate resilience and create new, more inclusive and equitable economies.

Together, we can make a difference to our people and our planet.

Warmly,



Corrina Grace



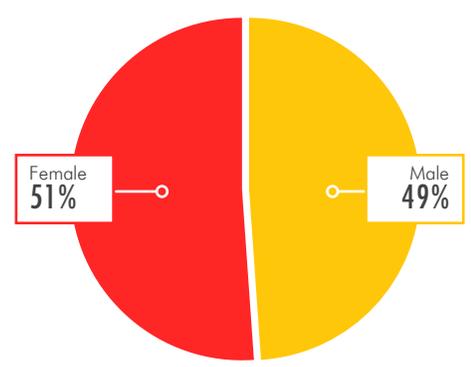
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SERES acknowledges the great gender gap in our societies and the importance to provide equal opportunities to young women, who are amongst the most vulnerable populations, but who are also effective actors or agents of change in relation to both mitigation and adaptation.

2015 SERES ESD Programs



2015 SERES ESD Programs participants by gender



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Was a year of recognition and validation for SERES' work – demonstrating how important it is to continue to provide empowering opportunities for youth to lead the transition towards a peaceful, just and sustainable future.

Here are some of our brightest moments:

one *of*
three

In October 2015, SERES was announced *one of three laureates* worldwide to win the UNESCO-Japan Prize for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

This Prize recognizes the role of SERES, through education, in connecting the social, economic, cultural and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. SERES co-founder Corrina Grace and Abigail Quic, SERES Senior Facilitator and Programs Director attended the award ceremony in Paris. You can read about their experience [here](#) and listen to Abi's speech after receiving the Prize [here](#).

SERES was awarded \$50,000 to go towards our youth education programs and is now an official partner of UNESCO's partner network for ESD.

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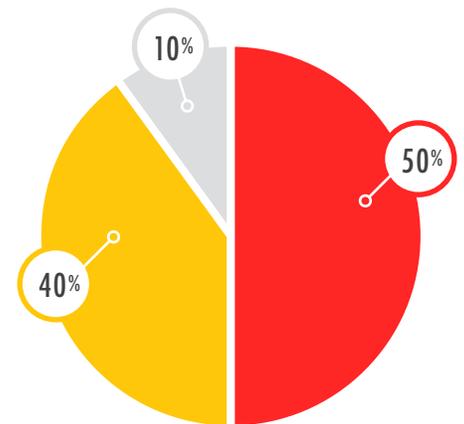
SERES was also named *finalist in the Equator Prize, 2015.*

This prize recognizes outstanding community efforts to reduce poverty, protect nature and strengthen resilience in the face of a changing climate. SERES was announced finalist among 1,461 nominations from 126 countries! We hope to make it this year!



In June 2015, we secured a 3-year program grant financed by the InterAmerican Foundation.

Funding for SERES ESD Programs



SERES was gifted 25-acres to build a new Sustainability Leadership and Learning Hub, we call it the *Communiversi*ty (follow to page 16).



Facilitators Abigail Quic and Antonio Sanchez were selected to participate in the 1st. Latin American Academy for Socio-Environmental Leadership in the Dominican Republic. Read more: <http://seres.org/2805-2/>



SERES developed a partnership with the University of California (the world's largest public research institution) to bring our sustainability leadership training programs to their students.



SERES Facilitator Abigail Quic addresses the UNESCO General Assembly during the ESD Prize ceremony in Paris.



Abigail and Corrina at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris with fellow prize laureates.



Antonio Cruz and Abigail Quic at the 1st Latin American Academy for Socio-Environmental Leadership in the Dominican Republic.

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ESD

EDUCATING FOR A *sustainable* FUTURE

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is about preparing young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to build a sustainable future.

According to UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization), this means ensuring that key issues such as poverty, equality and climate change are integrated into teaching and learning. It also acknowledges the importance of experiential learning, or learning-by-doing, using participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behavior and take action for a better future. ESD consequently promotes competencies like critical thinking, imagining future scenarios and making decisions in a collaborative way.

SERES has developed a series of multi-day training programs that integrate the requirements of ESD listed above. The programs consist of a series of multi-day modules, using a funnel model that channels participants to further training and leadership development opportunities. These programs enable youth to step into the roles of community organizers, future makers and innovators working together to build resilient, thriving and sustainable communities.

this is how we did it in
2015



YOUTH LEADERS FOR THE PACHAMAMA

community congresses

20 *congresses,*
471 *participants*

The YLP Community Congresses foster a culture of environmental awareness and sustainability through collaboration and shared leadership to help youth develop community vision and critical thinking about pressing social-environmental issues. This is achieved through a 3-day process built around community activist Fran Peavey's strategic questioning technique. The community congress culminates with participants planning their project and presenting it to local authorities.

“ *I'm surprised by the critical analysis of these youth...they are an example to follow* ”



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FACILITATORS' TRAINING

3 programs,
37 participants

This training is a 6-day residential program whose purpose is to train young sustainability leaders to facilitate transformative sustainability and change processes by providing them with the tools for transformation. Participants learn to facilitate the development of sustainability leadership skills that help increase the participants impact as leaders and agents of change (such as transformational leadership and community visioning) while having the opportunity to meet and share with young sustainability leaders from different settings and across traditional boundaries.

This year, for the first time, these training programs also included first-generation Latino students from the University of Irvine, California as part of SERES pilot Communiiversity Learning Journeys.

“*This learning adds so much value to my life, I now carry new tools to work in my community and ignite other communities.*”

Facilitator Training participant



Sustainable Livelihoods Training

3 programs
39 participants



The purpose of the Sustainable Livelihoods program is to help young local leaders play a role in climate change mitigation and adaptation through biodiversity conservation and sustainable watershed and natural resource management. The program has two distinct focus areas: **agriculture and watershed protection**. This year we integrated a Foodscapes program as well.

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Biodiversity Conservation Training

This program teaches youth about the **importance of the interrelationships between environmental health, economic prosperity and social values as it relates to agricultural practices**. This is a hands-on training in design, analysis and implementation of productive, sustainable agricultural systems.

This training was really important because we got a diverse amount of perspectives on sustainability in action, agriculture and local knowledge. This helped me broaden my knowledge and gives me the opportunity to share and implement these different methods and techniques with individuals back home.

Participant



Sustainable watershed management training

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These programs built on the work of previous trainings, in which young leaders trained during our 2014 program took the lead on implementing the program. SERES Alumni were responsible for arranging the two-day watershed study, which involved **using citizen science methods with groups of youth to analyze the water quality of the surrounding watershed.**

“ *This water management training showed me the real state of my river and how the contamination levels change from place to place and WHY that happens. I have a clearer vision and set of abilities to protect it.* ”
Participant



Foodscapes

One of the primary objectives of this training is to radically **shift the understanding of food and its connection to the land** from a transactional relationship to an integrated holistic relationship, grounded in the understanding that our food has a tremendous impact on our quality of life and on the wellbeing of the planet. Through this 3-day residential program, participants gather the pieces to write the “Foodscapes” (from seed to plate) story. The Foodscapes program was developed by Eco-chef and SERES Culinary Director, Roger Feely.

“ *This program made me realize that I need to make more conscious decisions about what I consume. I feel extremely inspired to begin a garden of my own!* ”



TRAININGS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

18 *programs,*
288 *participants*

During the summer of 2015 the Center for Living Peace sponsored the visit of SERES' principles Corrina Grace and Roger Feely at the University of California, Irvine (UCI). Thanks to this visit, UCI's Sustainability Initiative together with the student-focused GSRC put on a rich and diverse programmatic series entitled the Summer Sustainability Series (SSS).

The series was incredibly well received by participants and the wider community, and has helped to build a strong case that demonstrates the importance of these types of educational experiences.

Following this summer series, we will now enter into a period of more focused R&D and alignment building to both institutionalize these programs at UCI, and look at broadening our scope to look at system wide outreach and impact.

Program summary

Program type	Programs	Participants
Community International Immersion	3	13
Foodscape Seed-to-Plate	11	185
Transformative Sustainability Leadership	4	90

Offered to students, staff and community partners, SERES work at UCI included more than 18 distinct programs, residential trainings and workshops focused on transformative leadership, sustainable living and global citizenship. The purpose of the series was to build skills and experience, strengthen community, and invite participants into a pathway of sustainability learning and leadership.

“*I developed as a leader and I am confident I will be able to make UCI a more sustainable campus. This also includes making the community a sustainable and peaceful place for everyone.*”

The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, showing that students and staff alike found these opportunities incredibly useful and valuable to their lifelong learning. Many students described the experiences as “life-changing”, and the most unique and rewarding sustainability and leadership training that they had experienced. In the words of one participant: “this is powerful.”

As a result of these pilot programs, SERES will be working with UCI over the next two years to develop different curricular and co-curricular programs that will be offered to students across all 10 UC campuses.

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THE SERES

Community

A youth sustainability
leadership training center

SERES celebrated another milestone this year and we are very excited to share it with the world. In early 2015, SERES was provided with 25-acres of land by someone who has seen our work on-the-ground and believes in what we are doing.

Here we will build the **SERES Community**, a training center for the next generation of emerging leaders who will lead the transition towards a more sustainable future.

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In early 2015 we carried the **Communitarity Design workshop** whose purpose was to *develop the high-level concept design for the SERES Center that will be used by the core design team to take the project forward to the next level of fundraising and detailed design.*

The workshop took place over 2 days, co-facilitated by Corrina Grace (SERES ED), Fernando Maldonado (SERES Alumni and UCI Program Manager) and Rony Ajcot (Permaculture Design Specialist). Amongst the stakeholders were SERES youth ambassadors and facilitators from Guatemala and El Salvador, board members from Asociación SERES, first generation latino students from UCI, local community members, representatives of partner organisations (Soul Cocina, Play for Peace) and local architects.

In addition to this site map, the workshop also served to strengthen the commitment of the participants, in particular the local actors, to working with SERES to build the SERES Center.



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BUILDING local & global relationships

We have been working to engage with neighbors and local authorities to include their needs and desires into the overall vision for the center, and strengthen the local community.

SERES has also put together a cohort of regional professionals working on the design, architecture concepts and structural engineering that include Journeyman International; Integral Group; Benjamin Garcia-Saxe and Recrearte Consulting.



Local youth at El Rodeo doing a collective vision exercise for their community during a community congress.



SERES team facilitating a community engagement meeting with neighbors to El Rodeo, Escuintla.

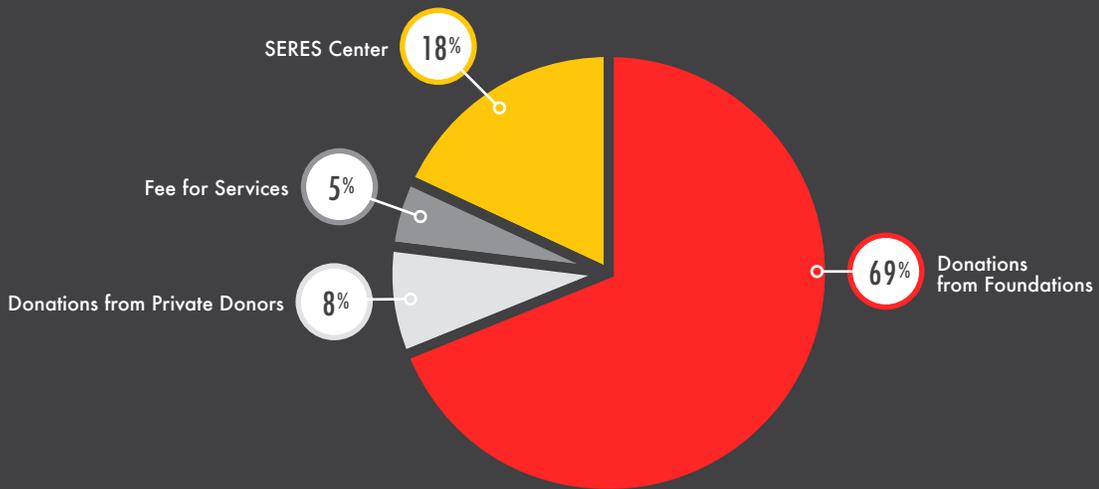
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

January – December 2015

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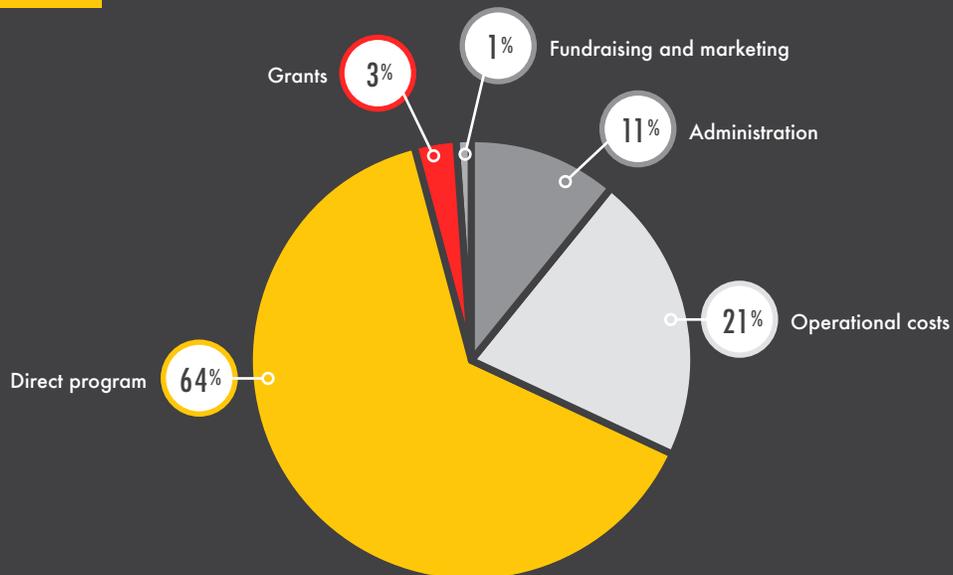
Income

\$239,221



Expenses

\$135,770



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We're committed to
EMPOWERING
a new generation of

7,000

sustainability leaders

by **2020**



Here's how you can help us:

\$75 will sponsor a young person to attend one of our youth leadership congresses.

\$250 will sponsor a one-day training or workshop for youth leaders to help them further their Community Action Plan.

\$750 will sponsor an emerging leader to attend a transformative leadership workshop outside of their community.

\$2000 will sponsor a life-changing 3-day congress for 25-30 young people.

\$5000 will sponsor a 4-day camp bringing regional sustainability leaders together to share, exchange ideas, build networks and collaborate on new project ideas.

All donations to SERES are tax-deductible.*
To find out how you can make a donation, simply visit <http://seres.org/our-impact/invest-now-2/> and follow the instructions for online or check donations.

For more information about SERES visit www.seres.org

*In Australia, USA, Canada, Guatemala and El Salvador.



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