

I had no idea how much iLEAP would change me, inspire me, and allow me to grow in ways that I could not imagine. It was during my time in the iLEAP program that my passion to empower youth in my community really developed.

Through iLEAP, I became a member of a community of support and sharing that really helped me see what is possible.

After completing the iLEAP fellowship, I worked hard to apply for a grant money and founded Formación Fénix, a program for youth with a focus on education, environmentalism, and cultural preservation. I am from a town situated in a beautiful coastal area in the Rivas state. It is an area that, in recent years, has become very popular for

international tourists. The development of luxury hotels and homes for foreigners created tension between community members, hotel managers, and tourists. Parents worried that the youth were losing traditional values when they were exposed to foreign influences. My objective is to work with the youth in our community to build pride in our traditional values, keep our town clean, and become aware of the opportunities a good education provides. I also wanted to ease tension between the community and hotel managers so I helped a negotiation in which one hotel agreed to build a new library in my town.

I am very proud of my community and I thank all of you who support iLEAP and make it possible for people like me to gain the reflection, knowledge, and network that leads to positive change.



Photo: A Formación Fénix teen displaying a pair of recycled litter earrings.

FUTURE HOPE:

Create more scholarships for local youth and increase the number of participants in Formación Fénix.



7 UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS
created for youth from Limon, Rivas Nicaragua



2,000
new books and several computers purchased for ONE new library

FUTURE HOPE:

Bring more opportunities for locals to open businesses by partnering with banks and organizations that distribute microcredit.



16 YOUTH
participated in Formación Fénix in 2012



1000'S
of pieces of plastic litter collected to produce 100's of fashionable bags and earrings made by Formación Fénix participants which generated funds for the group and cleaned up the environment.



3 PROGRAMS
created for Formación Fénix youth focusing on Education, Environment, and Culture to bring pride, awareness and opportunity to local youth



13 CENTRAL AMERICAN
iLEAP graduates gathered in Guatemala to build community and networks



1,000's
of visitors and tourists from neighboring communities attended 7 community cultural events organized by Formación Fénix youth



100's
of families enjoy a new community park created by collaboration with tourists and Formación Fénix



6 EDUCATIONAL
excursions to museums and cultural sites for Formación Fénix youth to help broaden worldviews and motivate learning.

FUTURE HOPE:

Build Formación Fénix into a sustainable organization with youth leadership, strengthen networks with iLEAP graduates in Central America and consult and mentor new and emerging community leaders to start their own initiatives.