

Women's fellowship program coming to Costa Rica through University of Peace

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The **Human Impacts Institute** (HII) is proud to be partnering with the University of Connecticut (UConn) and the **University for Peace** (UPEACE) for their Women's Empowerment Through Social Entrepreneurship Fellowship Program. The program addresses topics such as economic development, environmental, and health issues facing indigenous and Afro-descendent regions in Costa Rica. It aims to provide 10 U.S. and 10 Costa Rica professionals with the skills and knowledge on being effective leaders for social change by using the social entrepreneurship model. As part of the program, HII has participated in an exchange program as well as an online course, which will result in a certificate in Social Entrepreneurship at the end of August.



In April, HII hosted three Costa Rican fellows in NYC from various organizations including Earth Charter Secretariat, CGESTI, and Fund-cooperation. The women had a two week opportunity to participate in all of HII's spring programming including; Partnering with local businesses for conservation goals as part of HII's EcoPreneurs program, Traveling to Washington D.C.'s National Mall to lead citizen engagement workshops with HII's MobilizeUS! Coalition, and Leading environmental stewardship projects as part of HII's Growing Our Roots Program.

After participating in an online course based on social entrepreneurship, HII has been given the opportunity to travel to Costa Rica for the fellowship wrap-up. In Costa Rica, HII Executive Director, Tara DePorte and Program Coordinator, Melissa Mitchell are carrying out team-based social change projects in indigenous communities while also learning more about the three organizations who they were paired with in April.

Over the past three days, HII has explored the UPEACE campus, had dinner with members of the US Embassy & program fellows, job-shadowed at the Earth Charter Secretariat, and visited an indigenous community outside Costa Rica's capital, San Jose.

One of the many highlights was learning more about the Earth Charter Secretariat and their motivated staff. HII has worked with Earth Charter in the past on Coalition building. Both are part of the MobilizeUS! Campaign and RoadtoRioPlus20. HII joined Alicia Jimenez, Project Coordinator for a day of job shadowing. Alicia explained all about the Earth Charter Secretariat's mission and actions towards of more ethically sustainable world. HII participated in a staff meeting in which experiences, commonalities, partnerships and hopes for the future were discussed. HII looks forward to collaborating with Earth Charter in the future!

"I am honored to be part of such a powerful and driven group of women. Exploring the culture of Costa Rica has been a wonderful opportunity", Program Coordinator, Melissa Mitchell.

In the upcoming week, HII will be traveling to the Limon province, on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. HII will stay with an indigenous community in Bri Bri and attend a series of final program discussions in Manzanillo with the rest of the U.S. and Costa Rica Fellows. HII looks forward to the rest of their stay in Costa Rica and to building new partnerships with organizations they meet along their journey.

By Melissa Mitchell, 2012 Human Impacts Institute Program Coordinator.

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