

LíderAcción: Peru's Youth Lead Growth, Democracy

Lima, Peru – Defying trends apparent in recent opinion polls, 200 young Peruvians have completed an innovative new course, LíderAcción, in leadership and entrepreneurship, designed and conducted by CIPE partner Instituto Invertir. The program's graduates will soon be implementing the community development projects they created in the course, which ended on November 8, 2008 with a closing ceremony.

Peru is generally viewed as a successful economic model with some of the region's highest growth rates in recent years, but wealth and opportunity in Peru are centralized in Lima, and negative attitudes towards democracy are much more prevalent in rural areas surrounding Lima that have been left outside of the economic success. Recent polls show that 86 percent of Peruvians between ages 18 and 27 are unhappy or extremely unhappy with democracy, and 80 percent are not interested in issues related to democracy. Since nearly a third of the Peruvian population is between the ages of 15 and 24, this presents a significant challenge for the future of Peru's democratic institutions.

The LíderAcción program was specifically designed by Instituto Invertir, the Peruvian University of Applied Sciences (UPC), and CIPE as a response to this lack of confidence in democracy and the free market economy. The program provides an alternative to the negative image of the private sector and entrepreneurship among youth, especially those from low-income families located in the countryside. LíderAcción opens a window of opportunity for these young people to lead efforts to foster private enterprise and democracy in Peru.

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Students from San Martín province won the LíderAcción business plan competition with a proposal for an ecotourism company.

A Winning Plan

A group of students from San Martín province in the Amazon region won the business plan competition with their proposal for an ecotourism company in their home province. Their company, Bioadventur, will specialize in conservation, research, education, and ecotourism in Peru's central jungle area. The students plan to feature the many natural attractions of this area of Peru and will make use of proximity to the city of Tarapoto as a base for launching tours.

Second place went to a group of students from Amazonas province, whose company, Frutinat, will produce marmalades from native Peruvian fruits.

Third place was won by students from Huánuco province in central Peru, who plan to establish a private retirement home. Focusing on quality healthcare, recreational activities, and good nutrition, Misiki Wasi (which means "Sweet Home" in the local language) will improve the standard of living for the area's seniors.



Students at the LíderAcción program learn how become effective leaders in their communities.

*“I am hoping to be a seed
for a better Peru.”*

~ Hübert, LíderAcción participant

This first LíderAcción program awarded 200 scholarships to university students from rural areas in Peru to attend a series of three interactive, hands-on trainings in Lima, Peru on leadership, entrepreneurship, communication, market economy, business plan development, and civic engagement. The students from the first graduating class are all between 21 and 25 years of age, are currently enrolled in university, and have diverse career interests, including business, engineering, and law. More than 1,300 students initially applied to the program; a rigorous selection process identified the 200 best candidates.

Among the most important results of this first course:

- 200 students from rural Peru learned how to assume a leadership position in their communities and to foster Peru’s democratic development and economic growth.
- Working in groups, students developed 47 business plans for community development projects. Students were advised by faculty of the UPC business school. (Learn about the winners in the sidebar on the front.)
- A LíderAcción alumni network will support program alumni as they assume a leadership role in their communities and implement their business plans.

LíderAcción is cooperating with a number of Peruvian companies that will continue to support the graduating students. These companies include Interbank, Backus, TEPESA, Gloria, Southern Copper, and RPP News. ♦

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